

TEACHERS' PRACTICES OF QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES TO ENHANCE
HIGHER-ORDER THINKING SKILLS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

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A Dissertation

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AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of *Ganesh Shrestha* for the degree of *Master of Philosophy in English Language Education* presented on 28 January 2025, entitled *Teachers' Practices of Questioning Techniques to Enhance Higher-order Thinking Skills: An Ethnographic Study*.

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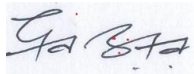
Nepal's school-level curriculum focuses on different skill levels, which are mainly based on Bloom's taxonomy. The implication of this taxonomy is equally focused on the English Curriculum. Though Barrett's taxonomy is theoretically implied for the English reading section, both taxonomies pay special attention to enhancing higher-order thinking skills. However, it is neglected in classroom practices. Test papers are seen with questions about understanding level. Students are not found attempting the questions of higher-order thinking questions in standardized tests. In my observation, teachers are found unaware of classroom activities of higher-order thinking skills. So, I carried out this study to explore teachers' practices on questioning techniques to enhance higher-order thinking skills.

This study was conducted as qualitative research to explore teachers' activities by observing their classrooms. Furthermore, the research participants were interviewed in a semi-structured format.

The study found that the teachers are aware of the importance of higher-order thinking skills. They know the importance. They have theoretical knowledge. However, the classroom activities are not carried out as expected by the curriculum. Teachers are found following the textbook, trying to make students understand the content. They are escaping and ignoring the questions that demand more discussion, scaffolding, and expressing views that are prepared for higher-order thinking skills. Similarly, internal tests are seen with questions of understanding level only. Likewise, teachers seemed more prepared when they were going to be observed, as I had two

research participants. The data showed that the specialized subject teacher was more pedagogically and linguistically competent than the teacher who was not recruited for a subject. The teachers need more exposure regarding specification grids because I believe that using questions ultimately enhances higher-order thinking skills.

Finally, the study revealed that teachers need timely training and orientation to conduct classroom activities and enhance higher-order thinking skills and test item design.



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शोधसार

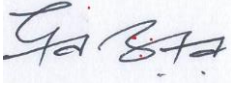
अंग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षामा दर्शनशास्त्रको स्नातकोत्तर डिग्रीको लागि गणेश श्रेष्ठको शोध प्रबन्धको शिर्षक "अङ्ग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षामा उच्च दक्षता सोचाइ सिप वृद्धिका लागि शिक्षकले प्रश्न सोध्ने विधिहरू र अभ्यास: एक नृजातीय अध्ययन " १५ माघ २०८१ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो ।

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प्रा. हेमराज काप्ले, पीएचडी
शोध निर्देशक

नेपालको विद्यालय तहको पाठ्यक्रम मुख्यतया ब्लुम्सको ट्याक्सोनोमीको विभिन्न सीपहरूमा आधारित छ। यो ट्याक्सोनोमीलाई अङ्ग्रेजी पाठ्यक्रममा उत्तिकै महत्व दिइएको छ। अङ्ग्रेजी पढाइ खण्डमा ब्यारेटको ट्याक्सोनोमीलाई सैद्धान्तिक रूपमा लागू गरिएको छ। यद्यपी यी दुवै ट्याक्सोनोमीहरूले उच्च दक्षता सोचाइ सीपहरूलाई विशेष ध्यान दिएको देखिन्छ। तथापि कक्षाकोठामा यिनीहरूलाई बेवास्ता गरिएको छ। प्रश्नपत्रहरूमा निम्न तहको सोचाइ सीपहरूका अधिकांश प्रश्नहरू भेटिन्छन्। स्तरीकृत परीक्षाहरूमा उच्च दक्षता सोचाइ सीपका प्रश्नहरू विद्यार्थीहरूले प्रयास नगरेको भेटिएका छन्। मेरो अवलोकनमा शिक्षकहरूले कक्षाकोठामा उच्च दक्षता सोचाइ सीपहरूका क्रियाकलापहरू प्रति सचेत नभएको पाएको छु। त्यसैले मैले उच्च दक्षता सोचाइ सीपहरू विकासका लागि शिक्षकले प्रश्न सोध्ने अभ्यासको बारेमा अध्ययन गरेको छु। यो अध्ययन गुणात्मक अनुसन्धानको रूपमा शिक्षकहरूको कक्षाकोठामा शिक्षण क्रियाकलापहरूको अवलोकन गरी गरिएको थियो। अवलोकन पश्चात् शिक्षकहरूसँग अर्ध संरचित ढाँचामा अन्तर्वार्ता लिएको थियो।

अध्ययनले शिक्षकहरू उच्च दक्षता सोचाइ सीपहरूमा सचेत रहेको पाइयो। उनीहरूलाई यसको महत्त्व थाहा छ। यसका सैद्धान्तिक ज्ञानहरू पनि शिक्षकहरूसँग छ तथापि कक्षा क्रियाकलापहरू पाठ्यक्रमले अपेक्षा गरे अनुसार नगरेको पाइयो। शिक्षकहरूले किताबलाई विषयवस्तु बुझाउनको लागि शिक्षण गरेको पाइयो। त्यसैगरी किताबमा भएका विद्यार्थीहरूलाई आफ्ना विचार व्यक्त गर्न लगाउने र ज्ञान विकासका लागि सहयोगका क्रियाकलापहरू जसले उच्च दक्षता सीपहरूको विकास गराउँथ्यो, तिनीहरूलाई शिक्षकहरूले वेवास्ता गरिएको पाइयो। त्यसैगरी आन्तरिक परीक्षाहरूमा बोधतहको प्रश्नहरू मात्र पाइयो। त्यसैगरी कक्षा अवलोकन हुने अवस्थामा शिक्षकहरू बढी तयारीपूर्ण रूपमा प्रस्तुत भएको देखियो।

विषयगत रूपमा नियुक्त भएका शिक्षकहरू शिक्षण कौशल र भाषिक प्रयोगमा तुलनात्मक रूपमा सक्षम पाइयो। शिक्षकहरूमा विशिष्टीकरण तालिकाहरूको प्रयोगको सन्दर्भमा अलि बढी ज्ञान आवश्यक छ। मलाई विश्वास छ कि प्रश्नपत्रहरूको प्रयोगले कक्षा कोठामा उच्च दक्षता सोचाई सीपहरूको विकासमा सहयोग पुर्याउँछ। अन्तमा यस अध्ययनले शिक्षकहरूलाई समयसमयमा कक्षा क्रियाकलापहरू तथा प्रश्न निर्माणसँग सम्बन्धित तालिम तथा अभिमुखीकरणका कार्यक्रमहरू आवश्यक पर्दछ।



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गणेश श्रेष्ठ

उपाधि उम्मेदवार

१५ माघ २०८१

This dissertation entitled *Teachers' Questioning Techniques to Enhance Higher-order Thinking Skills: An Ethnographic Study* presented by *Ganesh Shrestha* on 28 January 2025.

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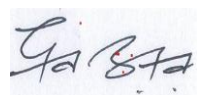
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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of the library of Kathmandu University. My signature below authorizes the release of my dissertation to any reader upon request for scholarly purposes.



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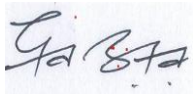
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my work and has not been submitted by any candidate for any other degree at any university.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ganesh Shrestha', is written on a light blue grid background.

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DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this dissertation to my family, friends, co-workers who encouraged me to pursue higher qualifications, mentors, and professors who showed light on my way to my academic journey.

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I would like to express my special gratitude to all the personalities who directly and indirectly contributed to the completion of my research process.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
ECD	Early Child Development
EFL	English as Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HOTS	Higher Order Thinking Skills
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
PD	Professional Development
SEE	School Education Examination
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a general introduction to the topic of this research. This research used ethnography as a research method. This chapter introduces my research agenda. The context of the study links the lived experiences that triggered me to conduct research. The statement of the problem follows the rationale of the study part.

Context of the Study

Teachers encounter many interesting and shocking incidents in their professional lives. As an English language teacher, I have had some incidents. Some of the events induced me to work in the field of ELT as a researcher.

The Gap Between Textbook Knowledge and Real-Life Application

Once, I was in grade three. There was a character in a lesson. It was about his family. The names of brother, sister, father, mother, grandfather, and grandmother were given. After some exercises based on the text, a question was given to talk about their own family. When I asked some students the names of their grandfather and grandmother, they could not say. The lesson was already taught. I was there to handle the class in the absence of the subject teacher. I was talking with them bilingually. I examined the copies of their homework. All the exercises based on the lesson were done. The teacher had corrected, too. I was surprised that the teacher did not realize the importance of such activities. The students were not given exposure to questions where students had to apply their knowledge in their context.

Bridging Understanding and Critical Thinking in Multilingual Classroom

I was working in different professional roles. Once, I was assigned to observe a teacher's class. The teacher was teaching a story. He explained every paragraph so well, and sometimes, he translated into Nepali. All the students were listening very carefully. It seemed the students were so satisfied and understood. After explaining the story, the turn of question-answer practice was given after the story in the book. The teacher started to ask questions, and students answered. The students answered the questions about a simple understanding of the lesson. These include the questions that were explicitly stated in the text. There were some questions to analyze, evaluate, and create. Like "If you were Shyam, what would you have done? What do you think Shyam did next?" None of the students attempted to answer. Then, taking permission

from the teacher, I asked the students the questions in a simplified version and later on in Nepali, too. The students remained silent. One of the students told me how they could know, as the answer was not in the story, and they could not find it.

Enhancing Higher Order Thinking Skills through Effective Questioning in Education

There was a terminal examination in 2020. There was a question of analysis. None of the students answered. Then, I asked the students why they did not write the answer. I got a response from the students that there was no answer at all. I was puzzled and looked back into the question paper. There was an answer perfectly sensed when reading between the lines. Then, I asked them some more related questions, but the students could not find the answer. However, students could answer the questions of lower-level thinking skill activities very well. Then, I collected two terminal examination questions and examined them through the lens of Barrett's taxonomy. Barrett's taxonomy is used for the reading section of the school curriculum from grades 6 to 10. The questions were from literal comprehension.

These three contexts have some common ground reality. The student's performance in applying higher-order thinking skill levels is directly related to the teachers' activities in the classroom. The higher-order thinking skill is not only part of the English subject. It is equally emphasized in the curriculum and other subjects. However, being an ELT practitioner, it was my responsibility to work on it. In this context, my first objective is to find the real picture of the questioning techniques of teachers and explore the teachers' practices of enhancing higher-level thinking in their classrooms. Secondly, when I would find the situation, I would be able to make some recommendations so that teachers would benefit professionally and students would benefit from a holistic career in the long run.

Competencies of Basic Level English Curriculum

NCF (2020) realized that the parents have positive attitudes and expectations toward English, which has affected learning from the elementary level. Parents' demand is high to run English medium in school. The flow of students in private schools is high. NCF also plans to develop teachers' capacity to continuously promote the quality of school education. National Education Policy (2020) has a special focus on the mother tongue at the elementary level. However, the medium of instruction can be English in mathematics and science. Curriculum Development Center (CDC) (2022) focuses on basic language skills, viz. listening, speaking, reading, and writing,

and gives them equal importance. The English curriculum for grades 4-5 specifies specific competencies students should develop. There are nine competencies. They are: listen and respond to familiar everyday expressions in English, comprehend and follow slowly and carefully articulated simple speeches on familiar topics, communicate ideas, opinions and emotions orally in various personal and local situations, respond to basic language functions, read varieties of simple texts on familiar topics for understanding and pleasure, show good control over basic vocabularies, write short and simple sentences to create a text, be familiar with English sounds and their structures, show an understanding of basic English grammar. Similarly, the curriculum of grades 6-8 specifies five core competencies: listen to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes; speak appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes in a variety of personal, social and academic contexts; read and understand a variety of literary, informational, and graphic texts, using a range of strategies or cognitive processes to construct meaning; write for an intended purpose and audience by generating, gathering, and organizing ideas and information; and demonstrate good control of vocabulary and syntax to express basic communicative needs. After analyzing the policy, curriculum, and its expected competencies, teaching English needs highly academic human resources. A wide range of classroom activities should be conducted.

Role of Questioning in Teaching

Questioning is one of the significant activities in the classroom. Nasution & Prihatini (2024) states that questioning allows learners to create or recreate meaning through language. Effective questioning calls for responses from the students during the learning process. It is an everyday activity in the classroom. Walsh & Sattes (2016) assert that questioning promotes active engagement and empowers students to become self-directed learners. Questioning has multiple roles in the classroom. It encourages critical thinking, increases students' participation, and helps a deeper understanding of the content. It is also a student-centered classroom activity. The result of questioning in the classroom depends on the teachers' ability to use it effectively. Are they used to recall information or challenge students to analyze, evaluate, or create? Teachers should play a key role in the classroom to help the students develop a higher level of thinking process. Teachers should be aware of the

time, content, and levels of questions so that the students can be engaged productively.

Rationale of the Research

National Education Policy has restructured school education into basic and secondary education. Still, the Teacher Service Commission recruits teachers in Nepal at primary, lower secondary, and secondary levels. Primary level teachers are supposed to teach up to grade 5 and the required qualification class 12. Those teachers do not specialize in any subjects. The lack of specialized teachers is common in other subjects, too. The teachers at the primary level have to teach all the subjects. This is one of the drawbacks of the teacher recruitment policy in Nepal. Those working as English Language teachers are assigned additional duties at schools. One of the reasons is that they can handle the technology better than others due to the language. Next, the teachers generally tend to follow the trend of teaching as they were taught. Students' mindset is like spoon-feeding. If the students are provided answers directly, they become happy. They are habituated to getting ready-made answers from teachers. They generally focus on completing exercises in the textbook and getting good grades in examinations. Some of the teachers focus only on achieving the course's textbook. Linda & Richard (1998) assert that thinking is driven not by answers but by questions. The question allows people to think from different angles, whereas providing answers ends the process and chance of thinking.

However, the teachers may not think to encourage the students to question, wonder, and be critical thinkers. Keeping these aspects in mind, the research would provide a picture of teachers' practice of practically enhancing higher-order thinking skills in the classroom. Similarly, it would suggest the concerned authorities think and plan to bridge the gap in policy and practices. Next, the school-to-university-level curriculum has given space to develop higher-order thinking skills through open activities and creative writing. The Nepal Government introduced the National Curriculum Framework in 2076, which was implemented in 2077. It mainly focuses on developing higher-order thinking skills and making assessments system-wide and comprehensive. This study would find teachers' practices and understanding of higher-order thinking skills.

Problem Statement

Higher-order thinking skills are essential for the students to achieve the goal of curriculum. Students are evaluated based on how well they answer in the

examination. Specification Grid of Grade 9 and 10 English specifies that 75% of marks are allotted to reading and writing (CDC, 2022). It is a more paper-pencil-based test. Students are expected to answer well even if they answer through rote learning. Grade 4 to 8 English subject Curriculum needs 40 % activities from internal assessment. The focus is still on the reading and writing part. The classroom activities also emphasize how well the students can handle the exercises. Those exercises are also for lower-order thinking skills. Higher-order thinking skills consist of critical thinking, problem-solving, etc. Teachers' questioning techniques in the classroom are crucial to cultivating those abilities. Traditionally, rote learning and lower-order questioning were focused. However, the teachers ignore the questions about higher-order thinking skills. This may be one of the reasons that students do not attempt questions of higher-order thinking skills. Opportunities for wonderment, confusion, or reasoning can lead students to explore themselves. In this context, I had some curiosity about the following issues.

Was there any role of good questioning to enhance the learning ability of students? What was the understanding of teachers in the role of questioning? Were the teachers using or adapting spoon-feeding mode in teaching? Did they let students think and scaffold for a response? What were the teachers doing in this regard? Was there any relationship between the good questioning techniques of teachers and the positive effect on students' performance in higher-level knowledge? Therefore, this study aims to explore the teachers' practices of questioning techniques to enhance higher-order thinking skills.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to explore the ways of questioning in ELT classes by basic-level teachers. Similarly, it aimed to explore the teachers' understanding of the higher-order thinking skill questions.

Research Questions

I formulated the following research questions to guide my research activities in exploring them in depth.

1. How do the teachers use the questions in ELT classes?
2. How do English teachers understand the process of questioning in the English Language classroom?

Delimitations

The research mainly focused on English language teachers' questioning techniques to enhance higher-order thinking skills. I used references from current provisions in the Nepalese school's English curriculum. The study also paid attention to teachers' scaffolding activities. It did not study different aspects and behaviors of ELT.

Chapter Summary

At the beginning of the chapter, I mentioned the incidents from which my curiosity was born to work on the questioning technique of teachers to enhance higher-order thinking skills. Similarly, the present policy of ELT and its possible connection are described concerning the issue of conducting research. Lastly, some delimitations of the study are written.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I reviewed different relevant documents, including academic studies, curricula, specification grids, and theories. Reviewing those documents helps the researcher to go ahead smoothly. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), “A literature review is a narrative essay that integrates, synthesizes, and critiques the important thinking and research on a particular topic” (p. 95). In this part, the researcher searches for related resources to the research topic. This chapter contains thematic, theoretical, policy, and empirical studies with their philosophical connections. It also consists of finding the research gap in different studies.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Benjamin Bloom worked with educational psychologists on the classification (interchangeable with the word taxonomy, p.17) of cognitive skills and learning behavior in 1956. Three domains were cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. According to Bloom (1956), the first cognitive domain has six levels, from lower to higher-order skills, and is called Bloom's Taxonomy (1956). They are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The knowledge emphasizes the ability to point out new sources or analyze the accuracy and reliability of sources. Recall is the broad terminology for it. The ability to find the meaning of a written work is taken under comprehension. The ability to translate, interpret, and extrapolate comes under comprehension. Similarly, the ability to apply knowledge in a new situation is application. Learning knowledge is primarily expected to be used in different situations, such as problem-solving. Likewise, the competence to analyze the organization of a literary work with its formal features comes under analysis. The ability to identify and distinguish is part of the analysis. Organizing parts or elements to the whole is taken as synthesis. The ability to integrate and combine knowledge is about synthesis. Finally, judgments and values from the literary work are taken under evaluation. The ability to judge the situation and evaluate critically is part of the evaluation. The original work of Bloom et al. was taken as a work in progress. Anderson et al. revised Bloom's original taxonomy in 2001. The revised version has

some terminological changes. Anderson et al. (2001) mention those categories as remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create (p. 268).

Based on the six different levels, different verbs can be used to form the questions. Fusco (2012) categorizes them into three major categories. The first category is the literal level. Only knowledge-level questions come under these categories. The verbs that can be used are recall, define, state, name, recognize, explain, list, describe, predict, select, tell, read, determine, identify, label, organize, study, classify, and conduct. Similarly, the second category is the literal and transitional levels. The questions of comprehension come under these categories. The verbs that can be used under this category are: explain, understand, translate, reorder, interpret, discuss, describe, prepare, explain the significance of, relate, distinguish, draw conclusions, deal with findings, estimate, differentiate, classify, construct, illustrate, represent, select, and report. Likewise, the other four levels are kept under the abstract level. The application level was the application level of verbs like apply, discuss, identify, solve, determine, predict, explore, explain, change, classify, experiment, relate, adapt, modify, figure out, conclude, persuade, and conduct. Similarly, verbs like analyze, break down, detect, express, label, recognize, compose, examine, distinguish, detect, identify cause and effect, recognize unstated assumptions, infer, investigate, state consequences, draw conclusions, make assumptions, construct, consider, compare come under analysis level. The synthesis-level questions have verbs like synthesize, think, integrate, draw out, respond, persuade, propose, plan, build, change, consider, hypothesize, represent, deduct, distinguish, propose, combine, reorganize, write, create, invent, design, formulate, perceive, interpret, debate, and defend. Finally, evaluation questions have verbs like evaluate, judge, test, weigh, appraise, determine criteria, value, state opinion, decide, indicate fallacies, choose, debate, defend, criticize, and justify.

Use of Bloom's Taxonomy in Curriculum and Formal Assessment

In the school-level curriculum of Nepal, Bloom's taxonomy is taken as the major theoretical base. Level-wise, grade-wise, and subject-wise competencies are designed based on Bloom's taxonomy. CDC (2078) has prepared specification grids, the questions of which are supposed to be prepared based on Barrett's taxonomy. Both taxonomies have similarities regarding lower-order thinking skills and higher-order thinking skills. English curriculum does not focus on remember-level questions. It begins with literal comprehension, similar to Bloom's taxonomy's understanding

level. The specification grid is prepared based on it. The number of questions is specified according to the different levels of taxonomy. The classroom activities are expected to focus on all the aspects of thinking skills so that required abilities would be fulfilled and expected outcomes would be achieved. The activities in the textbooks are designed based on different levels of taxonomy. The teacher's guide has given the guidelines to conduct the lesson activities based on Bloom's taxonomy. In this way, Bloom's taxonomy is a major theoretical base for the school-level curriculum in Nepal.

Barrett's taxonomy (1968) is incorporated in the reading section of the school curriculum in Nepal. If we analyze the specification grid of grades 6 to 8, a half percentage mark is allocated for the reading section. The division is made further according to Barrett's taxonomy. The categories are literal comprehension, reorganization, inferential, evaluation, and reflection. Out of 20 questions, eight questions are asked from the literal comprehension category, four from the reorganization category, five from the inference category, and three from the evaluation and reflection category. Similarly, the grade 4 and 5 specification grid specify that a question from each reading text should be from an inferential category.

Questioning and Higher Order Thinking Skills

Questioning is one of the means of interaction between the teachers and students in the classroom. It stimulates the mental process of the students. When discussing questioning, the key person Greek philosopher Socrates's contribution comes first. His practice in the classroom was a scholarly work. Later, his model of teaching was called the Socratic model. Ee (1989) advocates that questioning skills are very important for a teacher and are very complex. If these skills are used effectively, the students' performance will increase, and the teaching and learning environment will become more active and encouraging. Good questioning stimulates learning, develops the potentiality of thinking, and drives clear ideas, ultimately fostering the students' learning achievement. Feng (2013) opines that good questions rather than correct answers prompt good thinking. If students think through or rethink anything, they must ask themselves thought-stimulating questions. Students' creativity is not fostered because they are not asked questions to brainstorm. Students' queries are not scaffolded well. "... the questioning technique is considered as the key strategy to promote students to think critically" (Atika et al. 2013). There is regular interaction between the teachers and students in the classroom. Question-answer takes

more time for interaction. If a teacher is aware of good questioning techniques, students' critical skills can be easily enhanced, and it has a lifelong impact on students' learning. Belhamidi (2014) concludes that a positive influence on learners' critical thinking can be seen if the learning environment is supported by questioning, collaboration, and encouragement in a reflective environment. Similarly, Arslan (2016) opines that the questions are required to develop higher-order thinking skills. The skills of analysis and evaluation should be focused on good questions.

Pandey (2022) presents that using questions in the classroom is a long-term practice and an influential teaching technique. The study concludes that the teachers use most questions in the 'while teaching phase' of the class to promote comprehension, stimulate critical thinking, evaluate the students, and engage students in classroom activities. So, using questions in the classroom has multiple purposes. It is one of the easiest ways to engage students in the classroom. All the studies suggest that questioning is one of the key means to develop higher-order thinking skills in students.

Importance and Function of Questioning in the Classroom

Questioning is a widely used activity in the classroom. Teachers use it to check the students' understanding, involve the students in learning, and promote students' creative thinking skills. It is one of the active procedures in the classroom. Richards & Lockhart (1994) mention detailed reasons for questions used in teaching and learning. They are to stimulate and maintain students' interest, to encourage students to think and focus on the content of the lesson, to enable the teachers to clarify what a student has said, to elicit a particular structure or vocabulary items, to allow teachers to check students' understanding, and to encourage student participation in a lesson. Kanchak & Eggen (1989) grouped the functions of questions into diagnostic, instructional, and motivational, where a single question can serve more than one function. Diagnostic function refers to finding out what students know or don't know. The instructional function is related to facilitating learners to learn new knowledge in the learning process, and the motivational function involves students in challenging classroom discourses. Shanmugavelu et al. (2020) suggest some factors to consider while using questions in the classroom. They are attention, voice, pause, and content of questions. Teachers should ask questions in groups to ensure all the students are focused on the questions; otherwise, teachers may have to repeat questions for the students who are not paying attention. Similarly, teachers

should ask questions in a clear voice and a well-heard tone (Long, 1980). After asking questions, the teacher should wait or pause talking to give time to the students to think. The questions should be age, and ability-appropriate for the students.

Policy Review

Level-wise competencies of the English curriculum talk about enabling students to use the English language, think creatively and critically solve the problems that cope in real life, promote tolerance, and maintain socio-cultural harmony (CDC 2078). There are many skill-wise competencies. Listening, practicing thinking skills while listening, listen to discussions to agree or disagree are the competencies mentioned in the curriculum. Similarly, engaging in group discussions, expressing opinions effectively, understanding and applying the practices and values of both national and target cultures, discussing and evaluating feelings and behaviors, and supervising grade-appropriate intentions of characters from books or films are in speaking skills. Similarly, appreciating or critically commenting on literary texts at an appropriate level, applying grade-appropriate summarizing and paraphrasing skills, and practicing thinking skills while reading are some of the competencies expected from the curriculum. Likewise, writing critical comments or review notes on current events and incidents, composing free writing texts, demonstrating awareness of the practices and values of national and target cultures, and practicing thinking skills while writing are significant competencies in writing skills. So, most of the competencies are directly and indirectly connected to higher-order thinking skills.

Review of Previous Studies

Before beginning my research work, I consulted many previous literatures related to my research topic. It gave me insight into how to go forward. During my consultation with previous research, I found no research work on my issues with research tools and settings. Etemadzadeha et.al. (2012) presented a paper at the Akdeniz Language Studies Conference 2012 entitled 'The Role of Questioning Technique in Developing Thinking Skills.' The research was conducted in the context of Malaysia. It was experimental research. The researchers took the pre-test of 60 students. They divided the students into two groups -experimental and controlled. The experimental group was taught questioning techniques, and the control group was taught traditional methods as usual. Later, the post-test was taken. The analysis of results showed that the experimental group progressed by 17% more than the control group.

Babu (2014) researched the 'Nature of Questioning in English Classrooms Using Communicative Language Teaching Approaches at Junior Secondary Levels' in Bangladesh. The research was done on 40 students and 10 teachers. The research tools were observation, interview, and FGD. A mixed-method approach was used. The researcher found that 90% of questions were from the knowledge sub-domain of the cognitive domain. 55% of questions were closed in nature. Students' life-related questions were almost absent in the classroom.

Sano (2014) researched 'Critical Thinking Skills and Teachers' Questioning Behaviour in a Japanese University. The researcher had two teachers and students from Soka University as participants. Classroom observation, questionnaires, and interviews were the data collection tools. Classroom observation was videotaped, and later, it was analyzed quantitatively. The main finding of the research was whether language teachers integrate critical thinking skills in their questioning activities with proper materials that possibly enhance the development of learners' critical skills. One recommendation is to provide some time to think after putting the questions.

Khadka (2020) researched Promoting Critical Thinking Skills in EFL Learners using qualitative inquiry. The researcher has conducted the research in the urban setting of Lalitpur. The schools were English medium schools, and the teachers and students had sufficient exposure to the English language. The researcher has used interviews as a significant tool for data collection. The researcher also used observation and field notes as supplement tools. The knowledge and practice of critical thinking-related activities enhance students' thinking skills.

Khanal (2023) emphasizes the importance of contextual teaching. Language learning lacks meaning if the teaching is de-contextual. The research urges language teachers to adopt contextual practices to enhance student engagement, link learning to real-life situations, and empower learners through active participation and critical questioning. There are different ways of promoting higher-order thinking skills. One of them is contextualizing the context in real-life situations. It calls the thinking activities in the classroom, which supports higher-order thinking skills.

Research Gap

Etemadzadeh (2012) studied the impact of questioning techniques on thinking skills in the Malaysian context. It was an experimental design with pre and post-tests. He did not examine the pedagogical implications. Similarly, Babu (2014) studied the nature of questioning in English classrooms using Communicative Language

Teaching. It neglected the potential for higher-order thinking skills. Likewise, Khadka (2020) conducted the research in an urban setting. It was an English Medium school where students and teachers had more exposure and proficiency in English. The researcher has found that their knowledge of critical thinking skills is still unknown. The research primarily relied on interviews, which lacked a comprehensive investigation into diverse questioning techniques. Next, Khanal (2023) researched the importance of contextual teaching in promoting higher-order thinking, which lacks enough empirical evidence on critical questioning skills in diverse learning environments. The above references show a clear educational contextual gap for qualitative research. Next, I used observation as a significant tool where the participants were not informed about the area of research where they would be observed about the higher-order thinking skills and questioning techniques. The method I was going to apply was different than others. However, consent was obtained to observe holistically. So, I saw the methodological gap. Likewise, there was a clear need for research exploring questioning techniques to provide specific recommendations.

Conceptual Framework

<p>Major Themes</p> <p>Higher-Order Thinking Skills</p> <p>Questioning Techniques and Higher-Order Thinking Skills</p> <p>Teachers' Practices and Understanding of Questioning Techniques</p>		
<p>Theories</p> <p>Social Constructivism</p> <p>Bloom's Taxonomy</p>	<p>Methods</p> <p>Interpretive Paradigm</p> <p>Ethnographic study</p> <p>Class observation</p> <p>Semi-structured Interview</p>	<p>Procedure</p> <p>Research site</p> <p>Sampling</p> <p>Tools designing</p> <p>Data collection</p> <p>Data analysis</p>
<p>Key Focus</p> <p>Teachers' activities and understanding of questioning are needed to develop higher-order thinking skills.</p>		

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed different literature related to my research topic. First, I reviewed some literature that provided me with the philosophical base for my research work. After that, my review focuses on the theoretical aspects of my research topic. Only then did I collect information from the policy review. I went through global and local studies to find the research gap. Finally, I prepared the conceptual framework of my research.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter is about the methodological aspect of the research. It contains philosophical considerations about this research, the methods applied to the research site, participants, data collection procedures, data analysis, and ethical issues.

Philosophical considerations

Every research is based on a particular philosophical ground. Philosophy provides some guidelines of approach and knowledge to support the research process. It helps the researcher to understand the existing knowledge of the research area, existing practices, and the value of the knowledge. The philosophical ground is discussed from ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives.

Ontology

Ontology is the study of knowledge in existence. According to the situation, the knowledge can differ for a particular person. Realities can be different from person to person. One thing can be true for me, but the same cannot be true for another person. Time, place, and context make that different. The same situation can be perceived differently by people. Creswell & Poth (2018) stated that when researchers conduct qualitative research, they embrace the idea of multiple realities. Paradigm shifts can influence the ontological aspects. It gives the researcher a point at which to start the research work with a different realization. I did an ethnographic study where I encountered different research participants in different geographical environments. I believe that the data obtained from my research could not be generalized in all contexts. For a study on teachers' practices of questioning techniques to enhance higher-order thinking skills, ontology helped me determine the nature of questioning as an instructional tool and its impact on cognitive development. It helped me frame the conceptual foundation, guiding methodological choices and interpretations of how questioning enhances higher-order thinking skills. The collected data through class observation and interviews gave me the position of presenting a different reality of knowledge.

Epistemology

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy. It shows how knowledge is built. It helps us to understand how knowledge is understood and constructed. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated, "...conducting a qualitative study means that researchers try to get as close as possible to the participants being studied." (p.55). I had a close look at the subjective evidence. I tried collecting subjective evidence by visiting the natural setting and getting firsthand information. In qualitative research, the researcher has to feel the context so well. My epistemic belief is that the teachers' questioning activity directly influences the students' learning achievement. My research method was ethnography, where I did my research activities involving observation of the classroom and interviews with the research participants. The knowledge we gained from the activity in the field gave us a different taste of knowledge to work further.

Axiology

Axiology is one of the branches of philosophy related to values and ethics. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated, "...the inquirers admit the value-laden nature of the study and actively report their values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field." (p.55). Ethnographers' values and biases shape the research activities, such as participant interactions, data collection methods, and analysis. Guba & Lincoln (1998) also agreed that personal values affect how knowledge is generated, interpreted, and applied. Enhancing higher-order thinking skills is a widely accepted educational goal. In the context of teachers' questioning techniques to enhance higher-order thinking skills, axiology helps to determine the educational values of effective questioning. Fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and deep reasoning in students is a valuable educational goal (Brookfield, 2017). It deals with the value of knowledge generated from research work. The value can be different from place to place. In an ethnographic study, the value depends on the knowledge produced from the observation and interview with the individual research participants. So, I focused on the tools valuing the context and the participants during the research process.

Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research is a socially engaged inquiry. It goes deep into the culture of the research participants. It focuses on exploring and understanding complex phenomena, behaviors, or experiences. It generally collects data through observations, interviews etc. It allows the researchers to engage closely with participants to interpret

their experiences in natural settings. My research is qualitative, too. I used ethnography as the research method. My focus was to find a deep understanding of the ELT teachers teaching at a basic level in rural settings. I drew the pattern of their classroom activities on rigorous observation. The observation lens was Bloom's taxonomy. How the teachers use questions in the classroom through the theoretical lens of Bloom's taxonomy was the mode of observation. Similarly, I interviewed the teachers to determine their questioning knowledge based on the same taxonomy. I tried to draw the reality of teachers' practices and understanding of the questioning techniques to enhance higher-order thinking skills.

Similarly, the collected data was interpreted in different themes. So, this research is a qualitative study where ethnography was the methodology, and the researcher collected the data in a natural setting and interpreted it using different subjective themes.

Social Constructivism

The theory of social constructivism is rooted in the works of Lev Vygotsky (1978). He argued that cognitive development occurs through social interaction and mediated learning experiences. According to Vygotsky, learning is a culturally situated process. The individuals internalize knowledge through dialogue, scaffolding, and social engagement in this process. He coined the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which highlights the gap between what learners can achieve independently and what they can achieve through scaffolding (Mercer, 2000).

Social constructivism is one of the widely applied theoretical frameworks in educational research. It emphasizes knowledge that is constructed through social interactions, cultural experiences, and collaborative learning (Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of ethnographic research on teachers' questioning techniques, it provides an important lens to analyze how teachers facilitate higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) through questioning.

In classrooms, teachers play the vital role of facilitators. They use questions to engage students in understanding the content of higher-order thinking processes. Social constructivism suggests that effective learning happens in environments that give spaces to encourage peer discussion, critical inquiry, and active participation (Palincsar, 1998). So, teachers' questioning plays an important role in promoting the student's cognitive abilities.

Through participant observation and interviews, ethnographers can examine how teachers construct learning environments that promote HOTS. Questions in the classroom serve multiple functions. First, it is one of the easiest ways to engage students in content. Second, the teachers use it as a means of evaluation during lessons. Third, teachers can trigger higher-order thinking skills. Through the lens of social constructivism, researchers can explore how questioning techniques shape students' learning experiences and contribute to knowledge co-construction. For ethnographic study, researchers can observe classrooms and interview teachers. Researchers deeply engage themselves in the learning environment, noting patterns in questioning strategies of teachers in the classroom, student responses, and teacher-student interactions (Emerson et al., 2011). Similarly, conducting semi-structured interviews with teachers provides insights into their pedagogical beliefs and conditions, questioning techniques, and reflections on student engagement (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ethnography as a Method of Inquiry

Ethnography is studying a particular group to understand the behavior, culture, and interactions where the researcher immerses as a member of the same community. So ethnographers are cultural detectives (Gullion, 2022). Similarly, Ellis (2013) mentions that the ethnographer participates overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions, and collecting whatever data is available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned. Creswell (2015) mentions that ethnographic designs are qualitative research procedures for describing, analyzing, and interpreting a culture-sharing group's shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develop over time. Central to this definition is culture. Similarly, Robson (2016) asserts that an ethnography provides a description and interpretation of a social group's culture and social structure (p. 156). People in this research are studied comparatively long until the intended information is found. It tries to grasp lived experiences and shared patterns and performs a descriptive analysis. Brewer (2000) talks about the study of people in naturally occurring settings or fields by data collection methods. My research activities had a long observation period from a particular perspective to draw valid data. For this, I selected two schools, and a teacher from each school was the research participant. It was a rigorous task to conduct the activities there. The nature and possibility of

teachers' practices on questioning style, scaffolding, and promoting higher skills can also be different according to the subject's content. Data collection was done in various ways to validate the research findings. This process took a long time.

Selection of Research Site and Participants

There were a secondary school (1-12), a secondary school (1-10), three basic level schools (1-5), and a basic level school (1-3) in Manthali municipality ward no.4. The schools were led by the same educational policy of municipality and ward education committee. The community's people were from the same ethnicity, and their socio-economic status was similar. I chose two schools among them. One school was an under-resourced school that ran classes 1 to 5 (School A), and another was a resourceful school that ran classes 1-12 (School B). School A runs classes from ECD to grade 5, but the number of teachers was only 4. The classrooms were not good enough except for ECD. The number of students was low too. So, I called it an under-resourced school. Another school was a resourceful school among the schools. It ran classes from ECD to grade 12. There were 20 teaching staff, including a computer teacher, an accountant, and three office assistants. The number of students was high. The physical structures and human resources were comparatively better than those of other schools in the ward.

My research approach was qualitative. So, more samples in my research were difficult to choose. So, only two teachers from two schools were taken as the research participants in my study for an extended time. One research participant was a primary-level teacher (1-5), and another was a lower-secondary English language teacher (6-8).

After finalizing the research site and samples, data collection activity was done. The primary tool of data collection was class observation. Creswell and Creswell (2018) mentioned that a qualitative observation is done when the researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site (p. 262). So, my first planned task was class observation for an extended period to understand the teachers' activities on questioning to enhance higher-order thinking skills.

Data Collection Tools

As an ethnographer, I took the observation as one of the significant tools for data collection. My research focused on the teachers' practices of questioning techniques concerning promoting higher-order thinking skills. Understanding the

classroom scenario and keeping records were my major activities during observation. I even prepared my cell phone to keep the record. Observing from the beginning of the lesson to the end and keeping a record of teachers' questioning activities was planned by being an observer in the class.

Another means of data collection was an in-depth semi-structured interview. After the series of observations of the classes, a complete insight into teachers' teaching behavior would be captured. A series of in-depth semi-structured interviews was planned to cross-check their understanding and activities. The teachers were asked questions about higher-order thinking skills. Did they know the importance of higher-order thinking skills? Did the teachers have adequate knowledge of the process of higher-order thinking skills? The primary focus was on this matter. Similarly, I also tried to find out the cause of teachers' existing teaching behavior. The interview includes an informal, practical discussion on forming different levels of questions based on a passage that could verify teachers' existing knowledge on the preparation of questions. There were no restrictions on switching languages or sharing experiences. During the interview, a lesson from the textbook was shown to the teachers. I asked the teachers what procedures are generally applied from the beginning to the end of the lesson. Based on the responses, I prepared a procedural note on the knowledge and practices of teachers based on questioning techniques that the teachers employed. Similarly, a condition was provided to the teachers to prepare question items for the standardized test. These two things were focused on during the interview.

Data Interpretation

Data interpretation of qualitative research involves many procedures. It is a very engaging cycle of tasks. The collected data is interpreted from different perspectives. Creswell (2018) mentions that interpretation in qualitative research involves several procedures approach: summarizing the overall findings, comparing based on the concerns between literature, discussing a personal view of the findings, and stating limitations and future research. It followed the theoretical framework of Bloom's taxonomy. The collected data was interpreted based on the theoretically existing standard of thinking skills, expected performance by teachers in the class according to the latest curriculum, and my personal experience where higher-order thinking skills were focused on teaching and students' performance.

Quality Standards

The quality of the research makes it valid and generalizable. However, I believe that a method cannot address the quality standards of ethnographic research. Kakar et al. (2023) present a critical review of the trustworthiness of the qualitative data. They mentioned that the degree of trustworthiness of qualitative research can be measured by ensuring the credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability of research design, process, and action. I had to be engaged in the research activity on a deeper level. It had maintained some essential qualities. Guba & Lincoln (as cited in Riggs, 2015), have pointed out five qualities of qualitative research. They are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Different stages and research sections should have a valid connection with the issue.

Credibility

Credibility is one of the important qualities of qualitative research. The research should have a clear methodology, rigorous data collection, and transparent analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the period of data collection, I was deeply engaged in the cultural context of the participants. I tried to maintain the uniformity between the real scenario of the context and the participants.

Transferability

Transferability mainly focuses on the richness and depth of the facts that can be applied in contexts and circumstances. Bitsch (2005) asserts transferability can be maintained through thick description and purposeful sampling. As an ethnographic researcher, I did observation and in-depth interview sessions, which can be generalized in another setting.

Dependability

The consistency of the findings of the study is referred to as dependability. It refers to the extent to which the findings of research can be replicated under similar conditions, demonstrating reliability and methodological rigor. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is one of the challenging qualities because there are periodic changes. Research cannot maintain reliability if dependability is not maintained.

Confirmability

The researcher should be balanced all the time during research work. There must not be any biases or influences of the researchers in the findings. Multiple data sources make the findings strong by cross-verification. Furthermore, the research paid

attention to contemporary knowledge and research methods. So, these essential qualities were considered in the course of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Research activities undergo a lot of processes at different stages. Creswell and Creswell (2018) present some procedural ethics before conducting the study. They are beginning the study, collecting, analyzing, reporting, sharing, and storing data. Similarly, Cohen et al. (2007) state that procedural ethics are proposes, contents, methods, and report preparation of outcomes based on ethical principles and practices. Kumavat (2024) concludes by emphasizing the necessity of ethics, integrity, and trust in research and pointing out the importance of multidisciplinary cooperation, strong supervision systems, and education in promoting and upholding these values. Being honest at the research stages is essential to maintaining research ethics. Taking informed consent from the persons being observed and interviewed is an important ethical consideration. I kept the voluntary participation of the research participants. The analysis process maintained the anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants. I maintained a zero-harm policy during the research activity. I used generative AI to generate new ideas and restructure my language, but I have maintained my ethics here, too. All the ethical considerations were considered during the research process.

Chapter Summary

This chapter is about the methodological procedures that are applied in doing research. My first concern is the philosophical considerations of my research topic. Then, I clarified my research design, followed by the research site, samples, preparation of data collection tools, data collection procedure, and data interpretation. Finally, the quality standards of research and ethical considerations are mentioned. They were essential to make the research reliable and maintain the confidentiality of participants so that the original picture of the research area could be withdrawn.

CHAPTER IV

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND QUESTIONING OF TEACHERS ON HIGHER- ORDER THINKING SKILL

In this chapter, I have discussed and analyzed the data that I collected during my rigorous engagement in the field. I had two research sites with a research participant each. Data from both sites are discussed and explained in different headings. The pedagogical activities are highlighted so that the pattern of the teachers' activities can be drawn.

Visit to First Study School

The first school was situated at the top of a hill. There were dense houses near the school. Youth people were not seen in those houses. The impact was on the school regarding the number of students in school. The number of students was low. There were only 6 and 5 students in grades 4 and 5, respectively. It was afternoon when I reached school. The school was entirely silent. I could hear the voices of female teachers. There was the bamboo fence. There were no wired fences and gates. There were three buildings. The first building seemed unused. It was a truss building. The second building seemed old but was in use. The third building seemed new. It was painted yellow with red tinned roof. Each building had four doors. The second building had no window pane. When I reached there, some students started to peep out from it. There was a small ground just below the school building. It was enough for about 100 students to stand at once. Some steps and ramps were needed to reach the office room and other classes.

I went to the office. It was in the new building. There was a carpeted class near the office. Some kids were sitting around two round tables. A female teacher was interacting with the students sitting on the floor. When I stood at the door, she greeted me. Then the head teacher came. We exchanged our greetings. She was surprised to see me there. 'aaj sir, aaunu bhayechhha?' (you have come?) She exclaimed with this statement. Then she invited me to the office room. The room was like a store room, too. There were two cupboards, two sets of tables, and eight chairs. Other materials were piled up in the corner. I sensed that the school did not have a storeroom. I asked her, 'Why are all the things lying here?' She said there were no window panes in other rooms except the ECD room. For safety, we have kept here'. Without my

questions, she told me some historical facts about the school. The school was up to grade 8. The municipality degraded and adjusted the school to grade 5. The only reason was the low number of students. I asked the reason for the low number of students. She explained that the youths were either in the city or abroad for employment. And their children were in the town, too. Only children from low socio-economic families were there. The number of students was decreasing each year. I did not ask more about it. I understood why the first building was not maintained and almost ruined. Then I asked about the number of students and teachers. The school was up to grade 5. There were only four teachers, including the ECD facilitator. The number of students was only 26. The class was managed with multi-grade teaching in ECD and grade 1. The ECD facilitator was handling the class. The Students of Class 1 and ECD were kept in the same room. It was a carpeted classroom. The wall was painted with alphabets and numbers. There were some pictures too.

Knowing the First Research Participant

I explained the purpose of my visit. I informed all the details and talked about consent. Then the head teacher went out of the office room and came with a male teacher. He was wearing a 'Dhaka topi' (Nepali Cap) but was not wearing a school uniform. He just smiled. She introduced me to him. He was a middle-aged person. He had 14 years of teaching experience. He had the qualification of +2. He had not taken any training. He speaks in a soft voice. He prefers speaking less. The head teacher promised to help me, and she went to the class. I clarified the objective of my visit and way of data collection. At first, the subject teacher seemed nervous when I told him about the observation. He did not speak anything. He remained silent and nodded. After sometimes, he said 'ok'. He was ready to welcome me to the class. But he did not like to be recorded by any means. I assured the confidentiality of the data. Still, he did not accept my request. We agreed upon making notes sitting in the classroom. He explained that sometimes he had to teach two classes in a period, too. We planned class observation, looking into 'Nepali Patro.' I noted this in the diary, but he did not. He just nodded. Then I left school.

Following the Plan of Nepali Patro

The smiling-faced teacher of the basic school (1-5) had not noted the plan, but I had. It was prepared using Nepali Patro (Nepali Calender) sitting with him. So, I was to follow the plan. I reached the school. It was 11:15 am. When I reached the office, two teachers were sitting on the chairs, and they stood up for me to sit. My objective

was to collect data. I asked about the teacher who was my research participant. He came from class smiling. I greeted him. He greeted back but did not say anything. The third bell rang. The head teacher informed me to go with him. I followed him. It was grade 4. The students greeted us. The teacher said, 'Basa basa (sit down).' Then, the students sat on their seats. There were three sets of benches. An empty bench was kept at the end of class. I sat there. There were only five students in the class. Three of them were girls, and two were boys. The students seemed to be from low socio-economic status. None of them were wearing shoes. The dress was also not properly cleaned. The hair was not combed well. The trousers were in different colors. The floor was quite rough and dusty, and the wall was not clean. There were no window panes. It looked like it needed good maintenance. Later, I talked to the head teacher about improving the classroom condition. She said there was no school budget and that she had requested the ward office many times. There were no materials in the classroom. A small whiteboard was hanging just above the old, cemented blackboard. The room was spacious. Eight sets of desks and benches could easily be settled in each row. I had a notebook in my hand, and my mobile phone was in my pocket. The students frequently turned back to look at me. I did not look at them. I was just busy in my notebook. The teacher began the lesson by asking the homework that was given the previous day. He went to the desk and checked the homework. He also wrote some answers without telling the students. Then, he took a book of students and asked the students to turn a page. It was page no. 91 of grade 4 English Book. The lesson was about the solar system. He started to read a paragraph and tried to explain. I felt that he was a bit nervous. He tried to speak in English. But I quickly found that he lacked basic knowledge of English. Most of the sentences were grammatically wrong. His translation in Nepali was ok. He wrote the meaning of difficult words on the whiteboard. The students seemed familiar with the content. It was about the planets and the sun. He continued his lesson by trying to explain in Nepali, writing difficult word meanings on the whiteboard. The bell rang. The teacher asked the students to do exercises A and B and went out. The exercise was about finding words and short answer questions. The short answer questions were from lower-order thinking skills. Some of them were from knowledge level too because it was about the facts of the solar system and the students might have studied social studies too.

My Curiosity about the Continuation of the Lesson

The next day, I reached the school at a specified time. I went to the class, following

him. I was curious to know how he would continue the lesson. There were seven short answer questions. The teacher asked the students if they had done the homework. A student said 'Yes'. Other students remained quiet. He went to the bench to check the copy of the student who had done the homework. The teacher asked the students why they had not done the homework. The students were silent. Then he began the class. The teacher seemed prepared. He was there with some cutouts that contained the answers to those questions. The teacher read the questions and showed the answers to the questions on the cutout. He asked students to read and copy. He continued and finished this activity. When the students copied, the teacher asked the students to read, and he would ask the next day. The teacher did not allow the students to work on it themselves. He supplied the answer. He seemed more prepared for the lesson that day.

My Expectation of Dealing with Signpost Questions and Picture Discussion

The textbook for grade four has 16 units. Each unit has two core reading texts: reading one and reading two. Each reading text begins with some signpost questions. They are guiding questions. There was a picture of the solar system. The instruction is given to look at the picture and discuss to answer the signpost questions. I expected the teacher to spend time on signpost questions and invite discussion. The teacher did not give time to it. The teacher neglected both of them. The teacher did not discuss the signpost questions or the pictures. The students looked at the picture and spoke frequently, showing the picture.

Focus on Grammatical Items.

The textbook has two reading sections in each unit. Skill-focused activities follow each reading text. The book seems to try to maintain the importance of language skills. Specific grammar items followed the lesson. On the third day, as usual, I reached the school. I followed him to his class. I sat on the same bench. The teacher asked the students, 'Did you read the answer to the question?' Some students nodded 'No.' The teacher did not spend time on it. The teacher began grammatical items for the day. The teacher seemed busier and more confident in those items. The teacher focused on the rules. The teacher did not give contextual examples or translate anything in Nepali into that content. After getting the rules, the students were asked to do the exercise. The students were more engaged and excited to do those activities. The teacher was praising the right answer. The class seemed more engaged and livelier. However, using those grammatical items in practical life was not introduced.

No Use of Audio Files for Listening Activities

The textbook consists of listening activities. The listening activities are designed with specific brainstorming exercises as pre-listening activities. I was expecting the teacher to conduct the activities in detail. Unfortunately, the teacher directly skipped it. As usual, I did not follow the teacher when the class was over. I remained in the class. I asked the student, 'How does the teacher conduct listening activities given in the book?' I was asking them in Nepali. None of them spoke. One student whispered, 'Tyo bhaneko k ho? (what is that). Then I showed the exercise in the book, turning the pages. Then, the students said that they never did those listening activities. Then I went to the office. I found him and asked about it. He said, 'I don't have those audio files. How can I conduct it?' I opened my mobile phone and showed the site from where those files could be downloaded. And I requested him to give me his mobile to download. He only had a QWERTY mobile set that did not have the functions.

Teachers Create Writing for Students

Each lesson has some questions for free or guided writing. Dealing with those questions was very important for my study. I was eager to know how the teacher would deal with it. In this class, the teacher began the class by asking about the previous day's homework, collecting it, and correcting it in the necessary areas. The teacher did not give any verbal feedback. Then the lesson began. It was writing a paragraph on 'water.' Some clues were given. It was a guided writing activity. The teacher read the instructions. He explained that in Nepali. He asked the students to write at first. He waited for some time. No students began writing. The students remain inactive at this stage.

The teacher did not do any further activities. He started to write the paragraph on the whiteboard. The student copied it. The writing consisted of some grammatical issues. Some sentences lacked subject-verb agreement. Some sentences were not in the form of their sense. At the time, I wanted to add something and facilitate the students. But I realized that I was there to collect data. My activity would affect the quality of the data. Again, the teacher asked the students to read the text at home and be able to say it. The teacher left class. Some students were still writing. I realized that the students needed some guidance on handwriting. Students were copying the text. I left the class. I was not sure whether all the students copied them or not.

Discovery of Classroom Culture

After the consecutive observation of two lesson cycles, the teacher's pattern was discovered. The teacher always turned the page and began the lesson. The whole classroom activity focused on the exercises given in the textbook. Ornstein (1994) admits that teachers rely on books and workbooks due to a lack of time and training to prepare new materials. The text gives ample opportunities to use questions of lower-order thinking skills to higher-order thinking skills. However, the teacher did not give any effort or attention to it. Trying to follow the books focusing on grammatical items was the main tendency of the teachers. Signpost questioning and picture description were neglected. Listening activities were skipped. The teacher himself handled the free writing part.

Students' Feedback Related to the Observation Period

Interaction with the students was not part of the study as I designed. When the observation started, the teacher seemed more prepared and punctual. It doubted if the real pattern of teacher's activities would not be found out. So, I added the plan to interact with the students. When the teacher left the class, I remained in the class. I built a rapport with them. I gave words that I would not reveal any responses to anyone. My common question, in general, was, 'What were the differences in teacher's activity before observation and during observation?' The students looked at each other at first.

No one spoke at first. So, I pointed out a student and asked personally. The student smiled and said, 'The teacher came on time and taught full period.' Later, I checked the routine of the school, and the teachers used to handle more than one class in a period because there was no required number of teachers according to the number of classes in the school. 'Were there any differences in teaching before and during observation?' The students pointed out some issues. The teacher did not use to write answers if the students made any mistakes in their copies. During the observation, the teacher wrote the answer. Another response was the teacher spoke more in English. I was surprised that the teacher was not speaking English; he was explaining things in Nepali and mostly reading the instructions in the book. Students said the teacher spoke more in English. I realized during observation that the teacher lacked basic language skills. The students' responses gave me insight into the teacher's knowledge of the English language, too.

Visit to the Second Study School

The next day, I met the head teacher at the other school. I had to cross a bazaar to reach

the school. There were houses on both sides of a small road. The small road met a wide, dusty road that was under construction. When I reached the school, the school gate was locked with a chain and padlock. There was a tall wall for the road, which worked as the fence, too. I stood at the gate and blew the horn. A thin adult with a red cap came with many keys. He opened the gate and greeted me. I parked the motorcycle near the temple of Saraswati on the left side of the road inside the school compound. I could hear the noise of students. I easily sensed that the number of students would be high.

I moved to the office. It was on the first floor. I climbed up the staircase. There was a toilet just under the stairs. The staircase was narrow. It was almost one way. A bronze plate was placed on the wall of the staircase. The plate gave information on donors who donated to run +2. The railing was painted light blue. I reached the balcony, where I could see a two-story building with students standing outside the balcony. There was a truss building just in front of the building and a playground in front of the truss building. There were some tinned-roofed old truss buildings just below the playground. Then I turned right. The first room was the staff room. It was like a hall. Thirty people could easily sit in it. It was a carpeted room. I had to put off the shoes to enter the room. There was a table in the middle of the room, and armchairs and chairs were placed around it. There were some cupboards for the teachers to keep materials. There was a separate chair and table on the north side of the room. The table was designed for the assistant head teacher. There was a screen on the wall of the room.

When I reached, some teachers were sitting in the chairs. They were silent and busy with their mobile phones. When they saw me, they said, 'Oho'. I greeted them. They requested me to sit on the chair. I did so. They asked me the purpose of the visit. I said that I had little work to do with the head teacher. They showed me the head teacher's room. Then I moved to the head teacher's room. It was just next to the staff room. I greeted him. He requested me to sit on the sofa. It was a small room. There was a big table for the head teacher and a sofa on the west and south side. I explained the purpose of my visit. He was a secondary-level second-class teacher. He was ready to help me. He called the office assistant and left the room. He told the office assistant to call the English language teacher teaching grades 6-8. We gossiped for some time about the educational activities of schools till the teacher's arrival.

Knowing the Second Research Participant

After some time, the teacher came and sat on the sofa. We exchanged our greetings with each other. He was appointed as a lower-secondary English language teacher. He had 19 years of experience in teaching. He completed a Bachelor's degree. He also completed TPD training too. He is a middle-aged person with medium height. Then, the head teacher explained the purpose of my visit shortly. I explained more about it. I shared the academic purpose and obtained consent, too. He seemed happy to know about it. He started to explain the situation to the students himself. He expected to learn something from me. He had the third period in grade six. Accordingly, I had to manage my time. However, I did not reveal the areas of observation to the research participants. Then I came out of the head teacher's room. I saw two more two-storey building next to the office buildings. The physical infrastructure of the school was good. There was a tap in the middle of the ground, which could be seen from the balcony of the office building. The number of teachers was 20. There were 193 students. The first research site could be seen from there too.

Observation Cycle in the Second Study School

On completing the first cycle of the research site, I had mixed feelings. I was expecting something higher. I thought that the teacher would have more questions and I would be able to categorize them. I would be able to analyze based on the questioning framework. Then, I moved to my second research site. My second research site was a secondary-level school where a lower-secondary English Language teacher was my research participant. I reached the school at the specified time. It was the second period. On the first visit, I had to blow my horn to open the school gate. The same person came and opened the door. I went to the office. The research participant was in the office. He was ready. He said, 'Let's go, sir.' I followed him to the class. The classroom was on the second floor of the yellow building, which had eight classrooms. There was the wide staircase. The floor was almost ruined. There were two doors, and the windows had glass panes. The benches were placed in two rows. The classrooms were full of desks and benches. There was a set of chairs and a table for the teachers, too. There was a blue jar for the drinking water, too. There was a big monitor just above the whiteboard. When we entered the class, the students greeted us. The teacher greeted back and requested to sit. There were 29 students in grade 6. The students looked at me. I just smiled. The teacher might have already informed me about my presence. I sat on the last bench. He began

his lesson looking at me. First, he asked for the homework. There was more shouting of 'Yes'. I realized that the students were active. The teacher communicated bilingually. But he used English more as it was English class. The teacher began class by asking some questions from the previous class. He shortly reminded me of what was taught on the previous day. He seemed pedagogically better than previous research participants. His English was errorless. He began the lesson with a discussion on signpost questions. The lesson was about Rara Lake. He asked those questions, and some students communicated well. The teacher chose some students to read the text turn by turn. Then, he explained the lesson by asking questions. I got the pattern of teaching that I wanted to analyze. The teacher asked questions to explain the lesson. Those questions were from an understanding level. I felt it was a good activity for lesson comprehension. Those questions really helped the students to understand the text. They were responding almost well without the teachers' help. Some students were able to express themselves almost fluently. They were perfectly communicating with the teacher in English. I enjoyed the interaction pattern with the students. While explaining the lesson, the teacher was asking confirming questions with a readymade chunk, 'yes' or 'no.' Mostly, students were responding to the teacher.

Suddenly, I realized the total number of students participating. Only some students were interacting with the teachers. On the other hand, most students did not speak a single word. Even their body posture on the bench was not straight. It seemed that they had lost confidence. A different kind of curiosity took space in my mind. I wanted to know about the background of the students. The teacher completed explaining the lesson. Exercises followed the lesson. There were three exercises: match the following, true and false, and short answer questions. Due to time limitations, the teacher gave it as the homework. The subject teacher went out of the class. Then, it was my time to identify the academic and linguistic background of the students who were especially passive in the class. I began my curiosity with the students who were very active in the classroom. My first question was, 'Where did you study class 5?' The student was a girl. She replied that she was from a private school near Bazaar. Five students were from the private school.

Then, I pointed to a student who was entirely passive in the class. I asked his name. He replied in the Nepali language. I switched on Nepali, too. He said that he passed grade 5 from the same school. The students from private schools said that English was their easiest subject and social studies was the most difficult. On the

contrary, English was one of the most difficult subjects for the students who passed grade 5 from the same school. ‘Why were you not responding to the teacher in the class when the lesson was happening?’ One replied that they could not speak English like the students from private schools. ‘Is it the same in another subject?’ I added. ‘No,’ we interact with the teacher in other subjects.’ I just nodded.

My Curiosity about the Continuation of the Lesson

The next day, I reached the school at a specified time. I went to the class with him. I was curious to know how he would continue the lesson. The first question asked by the teacher was, ‘Have you done your homework?’ Most of the students answered ‘Yes’. He pointed out a student from different places and asked for the answers. The first exercise was about matching. He made two mistakes. Then, the teacher asked the class to share the correct answer. The five students answered loudly. Other students’ voices were low, though the answers were correct. He thanked all the students and went to another exercise. It was a false exercise. The teacher read the question, and the students responded. Here, the teacher did not point out any students. He read, and random students answered. I noticed that the bright students dominated the class. The teacher addressed the response as ‘good’ and repeated the answer with some grammatical corrections. The third exercise was about the short answer questions. Among five short answer questions, the last two questions were inferential-level questions. The bright students answered these questions, too. The teacher added some points.

The class would be lively if all students were like those bright students. The teacher did not ask any additional questions. He finished the exercise and went forward. The question was a thinking-level question where students had to share their experiences. Only a student partially shared her experience. The teacher again added some points and began another exercise. It was a speaking section. The speaking section contained degrees of comparison. The teacher asked to read the list. The student took some time to finish. The teacher added some rules for it, giving examples. The teacher had good preparation for it. Finally, the teacher asked the students to read and recite the list of adjectives with their comparative form.

Skiping Listening Activities and Focusing on Grammatical Activities

As the previous research participant, the teacher skipped the listening part. He said that he would continue that later. He did not spend more than a minute listening. Then, he began the grammar part. The grammar part was the continuation of speaking

activities. However, there were some exercises where students had to use suitable forms of adjectives in the blanks. After the rules for forming different adjectives, the teacher explained the context of where to use them. The teacher seemed relaxed in this part. He added some more rules and patterns on the whiteboard. The students immediately started to respond. Even the passive students tried to respond. The teacher was assigned to complete the exercises along with comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives.

Dealing with the Writing Section

The textbook follows a pattern of content. Each unit has two reading texts and skill-wise exercises. The teacher was handling the content meaningfully. After the completion of grammar items, it was time for writing. As usual, I reached the school. I met him on the ground and went directly to the class. The students were habituated to my presence. They were no longer looking back at me. The teacher asked for the homework in the group. He heard the majority of voices 'yes.' 'Is there any problem?' he added. The students replied. 'No'. 'Let's begin writing.' Without spending more time, the teacher began the lesson. He recalled the rules of using comparative and superlative degrees. Then, he read the exercise given on page 91. The teacher asked the students to compare the classroom with the previous classroom. Again, the same group of students started to share their ideas verbally. Then, the teacher asked to write them in copy in about 10 sentences. The students started writing, and the teacher wandered outside the classroom for some time. After 5 minutes, the teacher asked for some copies to check. He got some ideas to give feedback. He added some specific areas of comparison, such as size, cleanliness, space, desk and benches, etc. The students easily formed the sentences. Only some students remained passive as usual.

Textbook-based Teaching Learning Activities

The teacher's knowledge of the language was good enough. He was communicating well in English. He presented better pedagogically than the first participant. However, he followed the same pattern as the first research participant. He mainly focused on reading and writing activities in the lesson. He dealt with the questions of higher-order thinking skills, though the bright students dominated the activity. The teacher did not follow the steps in the teacher's guide. The teacher's guide had a comprehensive step of activities that included many activities of higher-order thinking skills.

Bright Students Led Class

The class was led by some students who were good at English. Those students with basic communication knowledge were found speaking and responding bilingually. They could read the text and understand the meaning. Similarly, they had cheerful faces. They seemed confident. The teacher did not pay enough attention to the students who were inactive in the class. They were not responding to any words. However, the teacher never gave any chances or encouraged them to answer. Moore (1984) found that teacher praise and disapproval were similarly unevenly distributed to the abler pupils' advantage. The situation in rural settings is still similar. While asking questions, the teacher asked in a group, and those bright students attempted. The teacher responded to them. He did not stop those students at any time. The teacher did not realize it effectively during the class.

Impression from the Study School and Participants

The study schools were taken from the same community under a ward of the Municipality. There were some commonalities in society for the school. People were from similar socio-economic status. Most of the parents relied on agriculture. There were mixed ethnicities, too. However, the distribution of human resources and infrastructure was diverse. The first study school was under-resourced compared to the other two. There were a few teachers, and the classrooms were not good enough. I found variations in the government's provision of resources to the schools, though both organizations were run under the same education policy.

Similarly, the first research participant showed incompetency in teaching the English language. He also lacked the required pedagogical skills. He needed strong support to strengthen his ability to teach. The second participant showed practical pedagogic skills in comparison to the two. The reason was that he was specialized in English.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the record of activities during the observation of the research participants. It mainly focused on the teachers' classroom activities through the perspective of questioning. The activities were separately presented according to the teachers. Differences between participants were also identified as comparisons too.

CHAPTER V

TEACHERS UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROCESS OF QUESTIONING IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

In this chapter, the collected data through interviews are analyzed and interpreted. After the classroom observation of the teachers, interviews were taken to find the teachers' understanding of questioning higher-order thinking skills. It was a semi-structured, in-depth interview. The theoretical bases were Bloom's taxonomy and Barrett's taxonomy, which were used to prepare questions for the reading section.

Relevance of Thinking Skills in School Curriculum

The school-level curriculum has incorporated Bloom's taxonomy as the major theoretical guidelines for the subjects to conduct classroom activities. Sapkota (2022) mentions that most curriculum objectives and learning outcomes included lower-order thinking skills more than higher-order thinking skills. The curriculum has implicitly incorporated different levels of thinking skills in the objectives and the learning competencies (CDC, 2078). Likewise, the teacher's guide has mainly advised Bloom's taxonomy as the major theoretical support for using the questions in the classroom. Similarly, the specification grid has demarcated even the number of questions to be asked in the question paper. The English curriculum is one of the parts of the level curriculum. It also has adopted Bloom's taxonomy as the major theoretical guideline in the course. Similarly, Barrett's taxonomy is applied in the reading section of the test paper. (CDC, 2079). After the consultation of these essential documents for teachers, it is expected that the teacher should have a level of knowledge of curriculum, different competencies, specification grid, and theoretical bases. The government has also prescribed the teacher's competencies framework. It also specifies certain competencies so that the teacher can handle the curriculum effectively at the implementation level.

Reason for not Revealing the Area of Observation

While taking consent, I did not reveal the area of observation. The second participant was curious to know about it. However, I only gave a general response. In my past experience, teachers seemed more prepared and conscious when a teacher is informed

to be observed. If I had disclosed that I was observing through the activity of questioning, they would have focused on it, and the real picture would not have been drawn. If I reflect on myself as a teacher, I would definitely be more prepared to give better performance, too. So, the only intention for not revealing the area of observation was the pattern and pedagogical activities of teachers would not be disturbed. I wanted to get the real scenario of questioning in the classroom setting during the observation period. The second tool for data collection was a semi-structured, in-depth interview. In this stage, the teacher would easily know in which area I was observing the class. I would be talking about the practical, theoretical, and pedagogical knowledge of teachers on questioning.

Understanding of the First Research Participant

The teachers' classroom activities gave an insight into the teacher's general performance in the classroom. Then, the interview was another tool to find teachers' knowledge of and understanding of questioning activities. So, I talked to the teacher about the time and place. I explained to him the confidentiality of data and the language he could use. He was ready to talk after school. I reached the school at 3:30 am. Students up to grade 3 were moving home. I met them on the way to school. Only some students in grades 4 and 5 were there. They also left school at 3:45 am. The headteacher said, 'Sir, we are about to go home.' She started her scooter and moved. We two remained on the school premises. There were no gates, and some of the classes were always open because there were no doors or window panes. 'Where do we sit, Sir?' At the same time, I noticed a big bar tree just behind the school building. I proposed to him to go there. We went there. The ground was good enough to sit. We sat there. We began our talk. He was a tech-shy person. He did not give me consent to record his voice. So, I had to note down the content. First, I asked him about his qualifications. He said that he did not study after class 12. He passed +2, majoring population subject from education. He passed the teaching license. He was recruited there as a primary-level teacher. There was no competition for that position while being recruited. He could not join the campus for further studies when he started teaching. He did not get any training as a teacher after being recruited. His school has a lower number of teachers than the number of classes. So he had to teach different subjects in his school on the same day. The teacher seemed overloaded with handling the classroom. He said many things in a question. He spoke slowly in a very low

voice. Next, I asked him about the new curriculum and new textbook. He said that the new textbook was quite difficult for him to handle.

'...I am from a population background. I was not good at English and mathematics in my school days. But I have to teach those subjects now. The new textbook is quite difficult for me. What to do? I have to teach anyway...'

He took a long breath. He seemed to be feeling overloaded. I reminded them that there were teacher's guides, curriculum, and specification grid on the websites and suggested he use them. He said he did not know where the curriculum and listening audio files would be found. He confessed that he could not use Android mobile phones and computers too. He admitted that he had never used audio files in English classes until then. My main theme in the interview was finding their questioning understanding to promote higher-order thinking skills. The teacher responded that the teacher would try to do the activities of books. His response to my curiosity to signpost questions and pictures:

'...they do not answer the questions. So, I don't ask those questions. I don't know why these questions are given and what is the importance of it...'

The signpost questions are given in the textbook to give space for higher-order thinking skills in the students. Any creative answer that is relevant or irrelevant to the content is expected. Jureeporn et al. (2008) suggest that training in sign-post questioning is beneficial, especially for low-proficiency students responding to literal questions. The teacher was not using those questions to teach the lesson. The teachers skipped those signpost questions during classroom teaching. The teacher did not get any idea of the theoretical importance. This part of the textbook is important for giving opportunities for higher-order thinking skills. However, the teacher generally skips it and does not know why it is given. It verified the first step of the classroom activities and the teacher's understanding of questions that call for developing higher-order thinking skills.

My curiosity about the types of questions and their use, the teacher responded:

'...I use the questions given in the book. I do not use any other questions. Some questions are difficult. So I write the answer. I don't give time to the questions that do not have answers in the book...'

The teacher was generally focused on literal comprehension, which is based on simple understanding. Some questions after the textbook are from higher-order thinking skills. The teacher accepted that he would give the answers to these

questions. Some questions needed the answer of one's assessment relating to the character or context. In this situation, the teacher said that he did not give time to those questions. This showed that the teacher had no theoretical knowledge of the taxonomy used in the curriculum. Writing the answers to questions was the way to handle the classroom. It did not allow the students to develop higher-order thinking skills. The next question was about the importance of higher-order thinking skills. But he did not know what they were.

'...I don't know about the higher-order thinking skills. But I think the students must be smart at this age. Otherwise, they cannot pass the exam. They cannot be a successful person in the future...'

The teacher did not know about higher-order thinking skills. The teacher gave a general response to it. The teacher was exam centric. However, the teacher showed positive remarks on the importance of higher-order thinking skills. I asked him if he had participated in any training and curriculum orientation program.

'...I have not taken part in any orientation program for the new curriculum. I have not got any other training, too.'

The teacher did not get the opportunity of training, orientation of curriculum and textbook. This may be the reason that the teacher lacks essential pedagogical knowledge.

The Teacher Prepares Understand-level Questions

I had planned to find out the practical knowledge of preparing questions by the teachers. So, I showed a lesson on making five short-answer questions. The teacher answered all the questions from an understanding level. Two of them had grammatical errors, too. Then, I asked a question of a simple inferential level and asked his view. He responded that that question was difficult to answer for students and was not seen in the test paper. He admitted that he did not prepare the terminal question paper till then. An exam committee at the municipality level prepared the terminal test paper. The teacher was not exposed to preparing questions for standard tests either.

Understanding of the Second Research Participant

The second research participant seemed pedagogically sound during class observation. We had planned to meet in the fifth period. He had a leisure period after the tiffin break. I explained to him the confidentiality of data and the language he could use. We had three rounds of talks. We could not have a long and comprehensive

talk at once because he had the sixth period to teach. And it was difficult to stay in the school and lock the gate. The first day was about his qualifications, experience, training, etc. The teacher qualified for a Bachelor in Education. He had completed Teacher's Professional Development training, too. He was appointed as a lower secondary-level English subject teacher. Upon my question of the importance of additional questions except from the book, he replied:

'...I think the activities given in the book are sufficient. The book is bulky, and we have to finish it too.'

The teacher seemed to be following the textbook in the true sense. The teacher was compelled to finish the course book, too. The textbook contains authentic texts with rich vocabulary and a lot of exercises. The number of reading texts is also high. So, the teacher seemed to follow the chapters. The teacher did not use any additional creative activities.

The next question was about the importance of higher-order thinking skills. But he did not know what they were about.

'...creative students are praised. We need to make our students creative. They can deal with the writing part of the textbook. But some students are so weak that they cannot even write a sentence...'

The teacher had positive thinking regarding the creative ability of students. However, the teacher did not know about the higher-order thinking skills. Clear instructions were given to the teacher in the teacher's guide about Bloom's taxonomy as the main theoretical guide to conducting classroom activities. The teacher confessed that very weak students in the classroom could not write even a sentence. This meant that the language ability, according to the class, was below the required level. Then, I wanted to explore the practical ability of the teacher in higher-order thinking skills. So, I had a textbook and showed a text to make five short answer questions to know his practical understanding of question preparation skills in the test paper. The teacher answered all the questions from an understanding level. According to Barrett's taxonomy, the questions were from a literal level. The teacher was unaware of the higher-level questions in the test paper. I showed him the specification grid and some questions of a higher level. He was surprised to see it. He admitted that a municipality-level exam committee prepared the terminal question paper. He recalled that he also prepared question papers two times. But he did not get any feedback too. This statement verified that the terminal tests also did not follow the

specific pattern of types of questions according to maintaining the different ability questions. The next question was about the teacher's knowledge of the provision of the new curriculum and its aspects in general.

'...there was no orientation of the new curriculum. Neither we have got any training on question preparation...'

The teacher expressed dissatisfaction with the government organizations for not organizing a training program to implement the new curriculum. There was no program related to implementing the new curriculum. The teacher confessed that he had not significantly implemented the new curriculum's teaching strategies. Upon my suggestion of joining and exploring the online platform, he shared his problem with internet issues at home. But in school, he promised that he would try to get new ideas.

When I asked about the theoretical aspects of Bloom's taxonomy and Barrett's taxonomy, he responded that he had heard it. He never paid attention to classroom teaching and the preparation of questions.

Chapter Summary

I analyzed the collected data in this chapter based on my research questions. The analysis was done in different headings as in the research tool. The interpretation was made based on the major themes created based on data.

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is about the major findings from the study on the research participants. Based on the classroom observation and interview with the research participants, themes were generated, and the data was interpreted. The collected data are analyzed and interpreted according to the teachers' activities in the classroom. The analysis and interpretation are done by creating themes. The themes mainly focus on the classroom observation of the research participants. Bloom's taxonomy and Barrett's taxonomy were taken as the theoretical base for the research. The themes are presented according to the research purpose, questions, and methodology.

Use of Understand Level Questions

The research participant teachers were found to be book-centric. The teachers followed the book chapter by chapter, skipping certain parts, i.e., listening and creative questions. Teachers explained the lessons. Mostly, they translated the text into Nepali. Some words were written on the whiteboard with Nepali equivalents. The students copied them and listened carefully to the teachers. The teachers frequently asked questions like 'Understand?' and 'Yes.' The students said 'Yes'. There were no verbal interactions except the confirming words. It was a shocking moment in the language classroom. Because students were listening to the text bilingually, no students were participating to develop language skills. The teachers asked students to recite the meaning of the written word. They were not aware of using words in their context. After the completion of the lesson, students were asked to do the exercises given at the end of the lesson as homework. Students' copies were collected; sometimes, the teachers went to the students' benches to examine the copies. The teachers used red pens and made the necessary corrections. The teachers gave the exercise books back to the students. Some students compared their exercise books with others. But most students just closed the copies and sat silently on the benches. Teachers reminded those students who did not do the homework to do the homework regularly. Most of the students did not do the exercises that needed creative answers.

In that case, the teachers wrote the answers on the board, and students copied them. And sometimes, the teachers said that those were unimportant for the exam.

These observations showed that teachers are habituated to following the books regularly. Being an experienced teacher, I expected the teachers to add more questions to help them comprehend the lesson. Those questions would make the students work independently and be more responsible for taking ownership of learning using the thinking process.

Regarding the pedagogical skills in the classroom, the performance of the basic level teacher (1-5) seemed pedagogically less competent than the teacher who was recruited as a lower secondary level English subject teacher. One of the issues was the use of language in the classroom. The basic level teacher (1-5) made many grammatical mistakes while speaking and even writing, and teaching English in grades 4 and 5 needs a competent subject teacher who specializes in English. Though both teachers followed the textbook as the ultimate means of teaching, the lower secondary level teacher conducted classroom activities more meaningfully and contextually, though it was not enough. Language class needs live discussion and interaction to develop language competence. However, the classroom seemed to be dominated by the teachers for the sake of understanding the text in the Nepali language.

Teaching vocabulary is still taught by translating it into students' mother tongue. There were no attempts to teach vocabulary by applying other relevant techniques. Diamond and Gutlohn (2006) suggest that a more general way to help students develop vocabulary is by fostering word consciousness, an awareness of and interest in words, and word consciousness is not an isolated component of vocabulary instructions. Teaching vocabulary is somehow meaningless without contextual examples or raising interest in students.

Similarly, the teachers did not conduct discussions while examining the homework. It made the students mechanical. The teachers corrected, and students did not analyze what was wrong or right. Students should know how the attempt to answer was correct and why some of the answers were wrong. The practice of submitting homework for the sake of doing homework does not have a meaningful impact on the students. Teachers can present the answers by finding the existing knowledge in the students and bridging the gaps if the students need more knowledge.

Similarly, the teachers' responses to the questions about higher-order thinking skills show their indifference to its importance. There were certain questions after each lesson. The teachers just used them. To foster thinking skills, the teachers should use more contextual questions. This activity demands the thinking process. Şeker and Kömür (2008) also assert that the students in the higher score group experienced thinking processes more intensively than those in the lower score group. The teachers used understand-level questions while explaining the lesson. Similarly, the test papers consist of questions of understanding level.

Teachers' Interactions with Bright Students

The participant teachers sometimes asked the students questions about their understanding of the lesson and other classroom activities like: who is absent today, collect homework, what the time, etc. The students who were active in learning and linguistically able interacted with the teachers. Some students never responded. Dahal (2018) also conducted an ethnographic study and found that the teachers often overlooked students' cultural backgrounds, leading to a disconnect in the teaching-learning process. The students who were trying to respond and doing short responses were found to be intelligent students. They were scoring good marks in terminal examinations, too. Some students never responded. They were always back in every subject.

The finding shows that linguistically able students dominate the whole classroom. If the teachers are not conscious, linguistically weak students can never build up confidence. The weak students never tried to interact. They neither ask questions nor attempt to respond to teachers' confirming questions. Teachers were leading the class as the talented students in the classroom. Only some students at the school led the class. The linguistically weak students remained passive. In this case, teachers should create an equitable learning environment to take the students to mainstream learning.

Teachers' Preparedness for Being Observed

When the teachers were informed that they were being observed for research purposes, they explained many issues and problems in teaching the students. Some of them were: students do not have the proper level of knowledge, the students do not do homework, the students do not want to study English, and there is no training for teachers. When the teachers found the observer in their classroom, they attempted to use English more frequently. The teachers tried to explain in detail. Still, the teachers

were not informed about the area of observation. After the class, students were asked about the different activities of teachers in the past and present (the observer's presence in the classroom) classroom activities by the subject teachers. The students responded that the teachers were more active and punctual. The observer's presence influences the behaviors of others because they know they are in a study, which may cause those under study to act differently (Neuman, 2003). One of the students said that if the teacher taught that way, it would be very good for them to understand the lessons. Some students responded. As a teacher educator, I had experienced that the teachers repeated the already taught lesson. They might have done it to give a better performance. They seemed to be using teaching materials, too. Students also expected better performance than the teachers performed in the observed classroom.

Avoidance of Listening and Speaking Activities

The curriculum has focused on equal listening and speaking skills. The textbooks have contents and exercises related to listening and speaking in each unit. The teachers' activities are reading and writing-focused. They skip listening and speaking activities. The primary-level teacher said that the audio files were not available to him. Government organizations do not produce those materials except by publishing them on its website. The teacher was unaware of the source. He does not know how to use them in the classroom. Adhikari (2010) also mentions that interactional techniques such as dramatic activities and role play were completely absent from their lesson. The lower secondary level teacher admitted that he knew the source of the audio files. However, he complained that the audio file has a difficult standard for the teacher to understand. No transcript was available. The scarcity of teaching resources, such as projectors, audio-visual aids, and textbooks, emerged as a formidable challenge, prompting teachers to employ alternative methods and personal devices (Singh, 2024). The teacher was reluctant to use those audio files in the classroom. The teacher could also use other reference materials available on the internet. The reluctance of teachers did not give exposure to the students. CDC should provide options for the under-resourced schools for the listening activity. Next, the teacher needs a native-like ability to understand the audio files. Simpler audio files could be used. The script of audio files could be uploaded to make the teacher comfortable in classroom use.

Similarly, the speaking activities were also not given space in the class. Small sections of speech have some objectives, such as improving pronunciation. One

example is the pronunciation of present simple with ‘-s’ and ‘-es.’ The basic level teacher (1-5) skipped it. The teacher might not be aware of its importance. Neglecting such activities stops students from getting exposure, which affects language proficiency.

Teachers Know the Importance of Higher Order Thinking Skills but Lack the Knowledge

The research participants' teachers were interviewed in-depth and semi-structured about their understanding of higher-order thinking skills. Teachers had positive remarks on the importance of higher-order thinking skills. But they did not know about it. The following conversation presents how the teachers skips from the expected responses and exhibits the teachers' knowledge of the importance of higher-order thinking skills.

Question: Do you think higher-order thinking skills are important?

Response: Yes, they are.

Question: Why?

Response: Because it makes them better.

Question: Can you specify?

Response: In general, they are good for students.

The teachers just responded that they were important. But they were unable to specify the reasons why they were important. They did not have a clear idea of different types of questions or higher-order thinking skills either. The teachers said they had heard it. Yin and Samat (2024) provide empirical evidence of the insufficient knowledge and proficiency in implementing HOTS among the surveyed teachers during their language teaching process. They also recommend establishing a supportive HOTS-promoting environment involving teachers. Similarly, they do not have theoretical knowledge of Bloom’s taxonomy. The specification grid of each subject in the school-level curriculum has a specific distribution of questions in the question paper. The students should have experience in solving them. To expose the students, the teacher should conduct those activities in the classroom. If teachers are unaware of higher-order thinking skills, it is difficult or almost impossible for students to develop these abilities. I showed questions to the teachers of higher-order thinking skills. They said they were difficult questions for students, and they did not use them in the classroom and skipped them. Teachers should be aware of the provision of questions to design classroom activities accordingly.

Lack of Teacher Orientation and Training Program

National Curriculum Framework has implemented a new curriculum in Nepal in 2076. The new curriculum started to be implemented from three classes each year, and the cycle was completed in the academic year 2080. (CDC, 2077). There is no curriculum dissemination program for teachers related to the new provision in the curriculum. The orientation on the curriculum had to be done before the implementation of the curriculum. However, the implementation policy is not systematic. It has affected the implementation of the curriculum as it had to be. Teachers are conducting teaching and learning activities as usual.

Similarly, there is no specific training program. The curriculum is published online. So, the teachers with internet issues don't have access to it. It directly affects the classroom performance of the teachers. Likewise, the teacher's guide and specification grid are not prepared on time. After implementing the curriculum, it takes some years to prepare the necessary teaching documents. Gautam & Raj (2022) also recommended that teachers need to develop the basic norms of the teaching profession and gradually initiate and develop the habit of using alternative materials to deal with the challenges and to handle the situations, schools have to arrange teacher development programs such as curriculum dissemination programs, training, workshop, and related conferences to update teacher with new ideas and skills. The teachers should educate themselves, too. They should take the initiative to update themselves. This is related to the teacher's competency, which is also prescribed by the government.

Teachers Recruit without Necessary Teaching Knowledge

This part is an additional resource of data that is relevant to this part. I had opportunities to facilitate the orientation program for novice teachers who had just been recruited into the teaching profession after completing the teachers' recruitment examination by the Teacher Service Commission. Education Development and Coordination Unit was the organizer, and they had a day program for orienting about overall activities teachers were supposed to do after they attended school, orientation on curriculum, classroom activities, and assessment procedures. I got the opportunity to work on five groups, with the average number of participants being 25. I used those opportunities to find more data on teachers' knowledge of higher-order thinking skills based on Bloom's and Barrett's taxonomy. The primary-level teachers did not have any theoretical knowledge of them. I presented a text and asked to prepare five short

answer questions that could be used in a standard test. All the teachers prepared questions from the understanding level of literal comprehension based on Barrett's taxonomy.

Furthermore, I always gave context in the session. 'If any student asked any questions, how would you respond?' I expected the teacher to do some scaffolding activities so the students would brainstorm and share ideas. The teacher would scaffold the students from the existing situation, and the students would get opportunities to develop thinking skills. However, all the teachers responded that they would provide the correct response without further activities. The incident gave me an insight into the fact that the teachers recruited are unaware of higher-order thinking skills.

Limitation of Study

The study was done in a municipal ward. It tries to give the picture of ELT in a rural setting. Due to geographical hindrances and the nature of the research method, only two research participants were taken. A larger sample size was difficult to handle in such a research model. The data collection tools are only two. The tools for collecting data are used to identify the real picture of the questioning technique, the main research area. The research participants were not informed about the topic of data collection. I was aware of possible hindrances in the quality of data. The whole process has tried to maintain the validity of data.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the major findings are analyzed in different themes. Two significant tools were used to collect the data, which are presented in different chapters. Then, the data is interpreted theme-wise in this chapter.

CHAPTER VII

IMPLICATIONS, REFLECTIONS, AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I mentioned the research findings for the areas of implications, along with reflections during the research period. Similarly, I concluded the research activity with the following insights.

Implication

The research done in the urban setting has shown curriculum-based teaching. The findings were satisfactory. This research was done in a rural setting. It has given some critical insights. The teachers are not going out of textbooks. Nowicka (2024) also finds that teachers frequently perceive textbooks as stabilizing, limiting their ability to adapt content to diverse student needs. Teachers feel it is easy to follow the textbooks. The reading activities are conducted from the teachers' perspective, where the primary skill activities are neglected. English subject is one of the difficult subjects in SEE results as well. The root cause is the poor delivery of teachers at the elementary level. The teachers are not specialized at the elementary level. Similarly, the orientation program of the new curriculum, specification grid, and teaching strategies are conducted. In rural settings, it is impossible to encourage teachers to update themselves in the updated knowledge. Glover et al. (2016) also identified that rural schools face significant challenges in providing effective professional development opportunities for teachers, including geographic isolation, limited availability of PD resources, and the lack of staff to support PD efforts. The scenario is almost the same in the present context of Nepal. Regular training programs focusing on classroom delivery are important to improve the classroom. Next, the teacher preparation course did not prepare the teacher with classroom knowledge. Sah (2021) finds that pre-service university courses and in-service teacher training curricula and programs do not seem to prepare teachers to deal with social justice concerns in their diverse classrooms. Rather, they limit their focus to general pedagogic skills, English language proficiency, teaching methodologies, and instructional material design. They lack the necessary theoretical knowledge. It has a long-term effect on teaching. Because teachers do not get in-service training when

recruited in service. Teachers need overall pedagogic training with a comprehensive theoretical base. The current provision in Nepal is not adequate in this matter. Basic-level teachers are supposed to teach multiple subjects. It is very difficult to specialize in subjects of different natures. It directly affects the performance of the teachers in the classroom.

My Reflection

Teaching was my passion in the past. My aim in life was to be a teacher. I am still unaware of how teaching became my passion. But surely, teaching was my first profession, and I continued it, collecting knowledge, skill, and experience, and saw my future in this profession. After completion of my master's in English, I came back to my village for the teaching profession. The knowledge I obtained in the city was very suitable in the village. So I started to get my fame. I was very sincere in the profession and very careful to update my knowledge. It gave me more opportunities to lead ELT-related activities at my local level. It gave me chances for more exposure.

Whatever opportunities I had, I always concentrated on the students' performance. How they can grow with proper skills and knowledge was my concern. On the other hand, pursuing higher education was very important for my career internally and externally. So, I decided to join Kathmandu University to earn an MPhil in English. Inspired by the academicians of Kathmandu University, I got an opportunity to immerse myself in the vast knowledge of English and pedagogy. So, working with students and classroom issues showed me the areas in which I should conduct research. During my teaching career, I faced many problems related to students' language performance, which were important for anyone's career. They could have higher-order thinking skills. Teaching in the past was based on rote learning. Those who came to the teaching profession continued teaching as their teachers taught them. So many discovered and recommended methods and strategies did not come to the classroom. Similarly, teacher recruiting procedures in Nepal are not directly related to enhancing teachers' performance. Neither training program for teachers is very effective. In this scenario, I attempted to conduct research in the areas of teachers' practices and understanding of higher-order thinking skills.

In the third semester of the MPhil, students had to decide the area of research. The course guided the students through the research steps. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our batch got the opportunity to take the whole class online. However, we received good support from the professors during our academic journey. After

formulating two research questions for this dissertation, I completed the roadmap of my research based on research purpose. It was qualitative research, where the interpretive paradigm was the research roadmap. Ethnography was my method of research. After the approval of my research, I went to the field for the data collection. I had high expectations from the research participants. When I shared my experience with the supervisor, he showed me the way out of my situation.

During my data collection time, I had mixed experiences. The research participants were hesitant to be observed. The teachers were not happy to be observed by heart. I had a research design to observe their class being physically present in the class. So, I did it as my research plan. I had not shared the observation area with any schools or research participants. After the class, I took feedback from the students. Students shared that the teacher's activity differed while being observed and not being observed. Students said that teachers were dedicated and punctual while being observed. I took notes of the remarks and activities in the class. I analyzed the data while being observed and not being observed. The statement of the students came true. Teachers were found to be more punctual, planned, and worked hard while being observed.

Whatever the difference I found, there were no differences in the use of higher-order thinking activities in the class. The teacher neglected this part. The texts were rich in vocabulary. So, the teachers spent more time writing the meaning in bilingual ways. It was a burden for the teacher. Similarly, due to the high number of texts in the textbook, the teachers paid attention to running after the course. Some questions about igniting higher-order thinking skills in the textbook directly escaped during the lessons. The main focus was given on the basic understanding of the text. Another part of the research design was conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with the participants. While talking with the research participants, they were aware of higher-order thinking skills. They share the importance of higher-order thinking skills. But technically, they could not share the concrete idea. When I showed the question from a text with higher-order thinking skills, the primary-level teacher (one of the research participants) said that the question was not from the passage and that the students could not answer it. It showed that the teachers knew the importance of higher-order thinking skills but did not have clear knowledge of them and did not give space in the classroom.

I got another insight from the test paper of three terminals and an annual exam. I analyzed the reading section of the test paper. The specification grid has specified the number of questions based on Barrett's taxonomy. There were no questions except literal comprehension, which came under understanding.

Another source of helpful and related insight for the research activity was from the orientation program for novice teachers organized by the Education Development and Coordination Unit. The two-day program was conducted, and there were three programs that I had the opportunity to facilitate. Being a researcher, I examined them with a questionnaire and open questions. The questionnaire was filled out randomly. During the open-question session, none of the teachers could share knowledge of the order of thinking skills. All the teachers prepared questions from an understanding level during the practice session.

In general, teachers need technical support related to the key and necessary activities in the classroom. The primary level needs subject-specialized teachers. The teacher preparation course needs some improvement to recruit skilled teachers from the beginning. Teachers' professional behavior should be improved, too.

Conclusion

The classroom activities majorly develop the students' performance, by the classroom activities. For meaningful classroom interactions, the teacher must be capable. The teacher must have essential abilities so that the expected development in students can be seen. During the study, I found that the teachers are not aware of enhancing higher-order thinking skills as expected by the curriculum. The government is indifferent to providing required training. Neither the teachers nor the teachers are motivated to seek professional development training opportunities that are available online. Similarly, the teachers were not aware of developing their own required abilities. The classroom activities are fully based on the textbook, where the teachers skip or do the creative writing part themselves. It does not give students opportunities to develop higher-order thinking skills. The current provision of the teacher recruitment system at a lower basic level (currently primary level) does not provide specialized subject teachers, but the curriculum demands it. Only specialized teachers can handle the subject curriculum and lay the foundation of knowledge in the young minds of students. This scenario can be common in many parts of Nepal. So, some steps to teacher development should be taken on time. More in-depth studies can be done for this purpose.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I summarized the study using different themes. The conclusion is explained. Finally, I have made some recommendations based on what I learned. Similarly, I have reflected upon the whole research process with concluding remarks at the end.

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APPENDIX

Some sample questions and guidelines for Semi-structured in-depth interview

1. Introduction, name, teaching experience, qualifications with major subject, age, teaching subjects
2. What activities do you conduct before you go to class?
3. What activities do you conduct during lessons?
4. Have you heard of higher-order thinking skills?
5. Do you think they are important? Why?
6. How do conduct activities for higher-order thinking skills?
7. Let's prepare any five short questions that can be asked in standardized tests.
(A short passage of the book grade 6)
8. Why do we prepare questions from the understanding level only?
9. (Showing a question of higher order thinking skills questions? Why don't we prepare questions of higher-order thinking skills?
10. What training have you got regarding the new curriculum, textbook, etc?
11. Have you seen any questions of this type? (A question from a text)
 1. How do students handle such questions?
 2. How often do you use such questions in the classroom?
 3. Students' answers will be different. How do you award marks?
 4. How do you feel about such responses?
 5. There are some questions in the book of this type. How do you help students with such questions?