

## Difficulties Faced by Bunia Secondary School Teachers of English in Applying Bloom's Taxonomy to Classroom Questioning Strategy (DR Congo)

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this study was to assess challenges faced by teachers of English course when using Bloom's taxonomy in Bunia secondary schools. The main objective was to know whether they apply Bloom's taxonomy in English language teaching process as one of questioning strategies. The assumption of this study is that questioning is an integral part of teaching practice since there is no teaching without posing questions. The methodology of this research adopted descriptive research design. For Data collection, simple random technique was applied to deal with sampling. Questionnaire and documentary techniques were selected for carrying out the research. Questionnaire protocol was distributed to 40 teachers of English teaching in 4<sup>th</sup> form of Bunia secondary schools. As far as data analysis was concerned, Statistical Package for Social Sciences software technique was applied to get frequencies and percentages. The results revealed that these teachers face various difficulties when questioning pupils in the classroom, low level pupils are not able to understand questions asked by their teachers. As these pupils do not participate in class, they become resistant and refuse to answer instead of making mistakes. Teachers are obliged either to work only with bright pupils or use French to reformulate some questions to be well understood. In addition, it has been found that teachers of English are unable to apply Bloom's taxonomy and classify questions according to their different levels; the main problem is that they misunderstand its use. As many pupils' level is low, they difficultly answer high order questions.

**KEYWORDS:** Bloom's taxonomy, teaching, application, questioning, learning.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Question is at the very heart of practices used by both teachers and pupils in the teaching-learning process occurring in classroom talk; one of the features of teacher's talk is to ask questions. Among researchers investigating on the topic, writer acknowledges that teachers can ask up to 80 questions in a one-hour teaching session. Similarly, agrees that teachers ask 93% of questions asked in class to keep learners actively involved in lessons.

Questions are considered as powerful teaching tools leading to knowledge learning; this is to say that teachers use questions for effective instruction in teaching and learning setting. They give opportunities for the teacher to identify learning challenges, meet learners' real needs, and accomplish learning achievements. Speaking of Socratic questioning, identifies spontaneous, exploratory and focused: they are used to support critical thinking and active classroom discussion; admits that questioning is a popular teaching style but teachers misuse it.

In language teaching classroom, questions constitute the most common form of didactic strategy used to guiding interaction between pupils and teachers, vice versa and pupils and pupils to enhance class participation. In addition, reference dealing with questioning strategies states the way students respond to teachers' questions influences the quality of classroom discussion and the effectiveness of instruction; having different qualities questions influence students' participation and involvement in language practice. Thus, the influence that questioning has on English lesson delivery has been investigated by many researchers; they have also demonstrated its relevance when properly applied. For by asking questions teachers can engage students to think about the content of a lesson and simultaneously get feedback from them to demonstrate the effect of teaching. Also investigating on the nature of questioning in English Classroom using communicative language teaching

approach found out that proper questioning practice can facilitate the student to master communication skills as it creates scope for learners to interact among themselves and develop critical thinking.

The writer states that Bloom's taxonomy is a useful tool for teachers to revisit teaching when applying a questioning strategy. It categorizes cognitive levels into several domains and was developed to provide a common language for teachers to exchange learning and assessment methods. The framework is used for evaluating a complexity of assignments, increasing the rigor of a lesson, simplifying an activity to help pupils personalize learning and providing an order for cognitive behavior in learning contexts. It enables teachers formulate a wider range of questions; eliciting responses in knowledge, comprehension, and application domains which are considered to be lower-order questions, while questions in the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation domains are known as higher-order questions. The latter category contains that prompt deeper and critical thinking. However, teachers are to be encouraged to ask questions addressing all cognitive domains and use a good mix of questions during each teaching session because the excessive use of one type of questions can lead to negative outcomes.

Teachers of English teaching in 4<sup>th</sup> forms of Bunia secondary schools are not aware of the effects of questions they ask and pay little attention to the types they ask pupils forgetting that the formulation of a good question is a creative act; they use poorly constructed questions that are likely to stifle the learning of English language by creating confusion and limiting creative thinking. English course classes are passive as their questions do not scaffold communication.

The following main research question leads to the investigation of the current study:

- What are difficulties faced by teachers of English when applying Bloom's taxonomy to their questioning practice? The secondary ones are formulated as follows
- What are difficulties faced by teachers of English when asking question in EFL classroom?
- Why don't they apply Bloom's taxonomy in their questioning strategy?

Questions constitute kinds of signal stimulus or teaching indications causing pupils to react during lessons; they lead pupils to self-discovery and self-learning under teacher's guidance to achieve comprehensive teaching goals. Thus, the work understudy aims to

- Identify the difficulties that teachers of English teaching in 4<sup>th</sup> form face when asking questions in class
- Find out the reasons why they are unable to apply Bloom's taxonomy since it should help them vary questions they ask.

## **2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Descriptive survey design was used in conducting the research. Descriptive survey research uses both quantitative and qualitative research methods. As a survey method it helps researchers to identify characteristics in the target market and particular population; they are either identified, observed or measured to guide decisions. descriptive research is carried in a natural environment. For this study, informants were teachers of English teaching in 4<sup>th</sup> form. Collecting their views on the application of Bloom's taxonomy in English lesson teaching classroom considered critical and contributed a lot in the elaboration of the present scientific work.

### **2.2 POPULATION**

The population targeted for this research, are full-time teachers of English teaching in 4<sup>th</sup> form of secondary level in Bunia Town. According to the statistics, there are 123 secondary schools in Bunia. But as the study was concerned with 4<sup>th</sup> form classes, 12 schools were excluded because they were in progression and had not yet organized 4<sup>th</sup> form classes. To avoid envisaged complexities, part-time teachers were not taken into account either. Many teachers were found teaching in two or three schools Thus, the population included 92 teachers of English.

### **2.3 SAMPLE SIZE**

Adopting mainly a descriptive research method, the collection of data took place in forty bunia secondary schools selected at random following simple random sampling. One teacher was taken in a school. Following stocker's formula, the sample was constituted of 45% of the population (92); this way forty teachers of English teaching in 4<sup>th</sup> form participated in the study.

## 2.4 INSTRUMENTS

For Data collection, the researcher relied on survey method whereby questionnaire was used as the main technique. It contained open and closed ended questions. For the latter category, respondents simply selected answers from the list given or ticked the best answer from the option given. For open ended questions, respondents were left free to answer in their own words. It was the type of self- administered questions without the presence of the researcher. It was helpful in the way that it enabled respondents to complete the questionnaire in private and to avoid the potential threat or pressure to participate caused by the researcher's presence.

The questionnaire concentrated on 'teachers' difficulties in the application of Bloom's taxonomy in English course teaching classroom. Another focus was put on the difficulties that they encounter in asking questions. There were both a closed-ended and an open-ended section in the questionnaire. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software technique served for data analysis to get frequencies and percentages. Data were coded and presented in frequency tables. Then, the coded data were converted into frequencies and percentages. The results obtained were used to show why teachers of English were unable to apply Bloom's taxonomy to questioning strategy used in their teaching.

## 3 RESULTS

The data presented in frequency tables below reflect individual teachers' opinions on the application of Bloom's taxonomy in English teaching classroom.

*Table 1. Frequency of Teachers Questions*

How often do you ask question during a lesson?		F	%
	Frequently	39	97,5
	Occasionally	1	2,5
	Total	40	100,0

Source: Primary data

It results form table 1 that, 39 teachers of English, representing 97.5% frequently pose questions when teaching a lesson but one of them does it occasionally.

*Table 2. Time of Asking Question*

At what time of a lesson do you ask pupils questions?		F	%
	At the beginning of the lesson	1	2,5
	At the middle of the lesson	1	2,5
	At the end of the lesson	2	5,0
	At any time	36	90,0
	Total	40	100,0

Source: Primary data

Concerning classroom questioning, 36 teachers of English, representing 90 % state that they pose questions at any time. 2 (2.5%) of them ask questions only at the end of their lesson and 1 teacher does it at the beginning of a lesson whereas the last spoke of the middle part of the lesson.

Table 3. Importance of Question

What is the importance of questions you ask in classroom?		F	%
	To check if what pupils have learned have been understood	13	32,5
	To attract pupils' attention and cause their curiosity and interest	4	10,0
	To help pupils participate in class actively and activate class atmosphere	9	22,5
	To open pupils' thoughts and inspiration to be developed	5	12,5
	To encourage pupils to speak and promote interaction among pupils.	4	10,0
	Total	35	87,5
No answer		5	12,5
Total		40	100,0

Source: Primary data

It is understood from the table and chart above that 13 (37.14%) teachers of English ask questions to check if what pupils have learned is understood, 9 of them say question's role is to help pupils participate and teachers think questions open pupils' thoughts and inspire their thinking to be developed. For 5 questions encourage pupils to speak and promote interaction in classroom

Table 4. Difficulty faced when asking questions

What is the main difficulty you face when asking questions?		F	%
	Low level pupils do not understand my questions	10	25,0
	Some questions are asked in French	1	2,5
	My questions are answered only by bright pupils	9	22,5
	Sometimes pupils do not react to questions	5	12,5
	Lower -order questions are frequently asked	2	5,0
	Some pupils are resistant and refuse to answer questions	4	10,0
	It is difficult to use different level questions	7	17,5
	No answer	2	5,0
Total		40	100,0

Source: Primary data

Concerning difficulty faced by teachers when questioning in class, 10 (26.32%) of them said weak pupils do not understand their questions, and 7 (23.68%) work with bright pupils and (18.42%) teachers find it hard sometimes to balance questions. For 5 (13.16%) others sometimes there is no reaction from pupils that way they ask some questions in French.

Table 5. How teacher Overcome it

How do you overcome it?		F	%
	-Translate questions into French	2	5,0
	-Reformulate it using easy words	14	35,0
	-Use gesture and drawings	2	5,0
	-Explain it	8	20,0
	-Use exercises	1	2,5
	-Encourage pupils to participate	5	12,5
	-Change Teaching methodology	2	5,0
	-Weak pupils are asked to repeat correct answer	2	5,0
No answer		4	10,0
Total		40	100,0

Source: Primary data

Concerning strategy that teachers use to overcome difficulties faced when questioning, 14 teachers representing 35 % stated that they reformulate questions using easy words, 8 (20%) of them said they explain questions and 5 others encourage pupils to participate. Still 2 (5%) teachers translate questions into French, 2 (5%) others use gesture and drawing and 2 (5%) last teachers ask weak pupils to repeat correct answers.

**Table 6. If Questions Foster Communication in Classroom**

<b>Do you think good questions can improve pupils' communicative ability?</b>		<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
	If well- distributed, questions oblige pupils to speak the target language	15	37,5
	Questions give opportunity for classroom interaction.	4	10,0
	They enable teachers to control permanently the progress of pupils	2	5,0
	They encourage Pupils to speak	18	45,0
No answer		1	2,5
Total		40	100,0

Source: Primary data

About the extent to which questioning helps pupils to develop communicative competence, 18 teachers covering (45%) agreed that it encourages pupils to speak the language and 15 of them stated that questioning obliges most of pupils to speak and confirmed that it creates interaction. Whereas for 4 others, questions foster classroom communication

**Table 7. Teachers Knowledge of Bloom's Taxonomy**

<b>What do you know about Bloom's taxonomy?</b>		<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
	It is a taxonomy which helps to plan and ask well-thought and structured questions	4	10,0
	It enables Teachers to gauge the levels of their class and vary questions	10	25,0
	It is a multilayer taxonomy that helps to categorize questions	5	12,5
	Its six levels are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation	18	45,0
	I know nothing about it	1	2,5
No answer		2	5,0
Total		40	100,0

Source: Primary source (2019)

It results from the table and chart that 18 (32,7%) teachers of English know Bloom's taxonomy as a framework having six levels that are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation, 10 (18,2%) of them declared that Bloom's taxonomy enables teachers to gauge pupils level and vary questions and 5 teachers think that it is multi-layer taxonomy that helps to categorize questions asked by teachers. For 5 others, Bloom's taxonomy enables teachers to ask well-thought questions but 1 teacher knows nothing about it.

**Table 8. Difficulty of Using Bloom's Taxonomy**

<b>What difficulty do you face when applying Bloom's taxonomy?</b>		<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
	I do not know how to use it	1	2,5
	Pupils hardly respond to higher level questions	22	55,0
	It is difficult to apply it because of pupils' low level	10	25,0
	I am unable to classify questions according to bloom's taxonomy	3	7,5
No answer		4	10,0
Total		40	100,0

Source: Primary source (2019)

Concerning the difficulties faced by English teachers in using Bloom's taxonomy, 22 (55%) of them declared that when respecting the different levels, pupils hardly answer higher order questions, 10 teachers, representing 25% estimated that it is

difficult to use the taxonomy because of its levels and 3 (7,5%) others stated that they were unable to classify questions according to the frame

**Table 9. How to Encourage Teachers of English to Use Bloom's Taxonomy**

How should teachers be encouraged to use Bloom's Taxonomy in EFL classroom?		F	%
	Seminars	8	20,0
	Recycling	11	27,5
	Minimizing talk	8	20,0
	Apply the taxonomy	4	10,0
No answer		9	22,5
Total		40	100,0

Source: Primary data

Concerning the strategy to use in order to encourage teachers to use bloom's taxonomy in ELT, 11 (25%) teachers suggested recycling, 8 of them proposed organization of seminars and 8 others estimated that teachers should minimize talk. For 4 others, it should be applied correctly.

**Table 10. If Effective Use of Bloom's Taxonomy Can Enhance English Language Learning**

Do you have the feeling that Bloom taxonomy can enhance English language learning?		F	%
	Yes	37	92,5
	No	2	5,0
No answer		1	2,5
Total		40	100,0

Source: Primary data

To know if the use of Bloom's taxonomy can help the learning of English language 37 teachers, representing 94.87 % agree and recommend that teachers be able to apply bloom's taxonomy but 2 others disagree.

#### 4 DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of the findings, it has been understood that teachers of English teach without any specific questioning strategy; they frequently use questions when teaching but do not organize their questioning activity correctly; there is no question planning strategy among them. [3] adds in the second part of his book that mastering appropriate techniques for asking questions should be part of every teachers' routine to help students understand the content of a class and promote communication; when they prepare lesson, they should foresee questions to use for introducing or clarifying major ideas or concepts of lesson at appropriate moment of the lesson to scaffold students learning and promote gradual mastery of discussion. This is crucial for keeping the flow of ideas and interaction alive when asking right questions since the process of asking question act is a catalyst for curiosity, critical thinking, engagement, effective communication, a growth mindset and inclusivity.

However, concerning difficulties teachers encounter when asking questions; the study noted that pupils are unable to respond to teachers' questions because they do not understand them. As pupils have little knowledge of the target language; they complain saying that some of teachers questions are difficult. This is why pupils cannot interact with the teacher in class and practice the target language. This challenge does not only result from the ineffectiveness of questioning technique used by teachers but also because pupils are not accustomed to various kinds of questions. Asking good questions should increase pupils' engagement or boost their participation and interaction if well-distributed since questions get learners to think, explore, analyses, debate or examine information in a deep way.

As far as the use of Bloom's taxonomy is concerned, the research showed that, neither school authorities nor language teachers apply the framework in their teaching. Among them, it is known as a theoretical approach that cannot be applied in language teaching to evaluate language performance. A few acknowledge having studied the theory but not applied it. This is the reason why, they do not have any theory to rely on for implementing effective questioning strategy in the teaching and learning processes of English language. They ignore that Bloom's taxonomy helps to measure the different levels of learning

and assess language learning. Teachers do not know how to use it; they have vague knowledge about the theory. In addition, teachers of English think using Bloom's taxonomy is challenging and time consuming because some of its levels are difficult and complex. [12] Admits teachers' limited knowledge of the concept has impact on them not only in the use but also in the formulation of question types to match the different levels. As a remedy, these teachers have suggested recycling or training to reinforce their capacity.

## **5 CONCLUSION**

This study searches to understand why 4<sup>th</sup> form pupils are challenged to answer questions asked by their teachers in classroom and know the reasons why they cannot apply Bloom's Taxonomy to their questioning strategy. It also intended to check if question asked in classroom are varied. In the light of the results, the following conclusion were drawn. Almost every lesson starts with questions i.e teachers pose questions at any time of their lesson. The majority of questions asked by teachers of English are not understood because of pupils' level. Good inquiry from teachers' strategy must respond to pupils' questions in a manner that encourages verbal interaction.

This study is set out to identify the types of questions asked by teachers of English and categorize them on the basis of Bloom's Taxonomy. It also intended to check if classroom questioning enhance pupils' communicative competence. However, in the light of the results and discussion the following conclusion were drawn. Almost every lesson starts with question and ends with a task assigned through questions i.e teachers pose questions at any time of their lesson. The majority of questions asked should bring positive relationship between the critical thinking ability of language learners and their language performance because a crucial skill to be practiced in language classrooms. In shedding some light on the importance of teacher' questioning skills, the study invites teachers to apply questioning skill to enhance learners' speaking skill. They have to apply comfortable and appropriate questioning strategies that are suitable for pupils and the classroom situation. Therefore, some pedagogical purposes of questioning are to be achieved, including development of pupils' language proficiency, measuring their abilities, and motivating them to speak the target language.

Findings finally has supported that good questioning is a basic method to implement by a teacher of English to build interaction in classroom and stimulate students to perform their speaking skill in the target language. With regard to the above results I suggest the followings:

- Application of Bloom's taxonomy as one of strategies used when questioning;
- Recycling of teachers of English for effective questioning in EFL.

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