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Integrating Higher Order Thinking Skills In Teaching English For Specific Purposes: Pedagogical Implications

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Abstract— Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) have become an important focus in higher education. In English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, students are expected not only to improve their language proficiency but also to develop analytical and professional skills required in real-world contexts. However, classroom instruction in ESP settings often focuses primarily on knowledge acquisition, which may limit opportunities for students to develop higher-level cognitive abilities. This paper aims to examine the role of HOTS in the teaching of Event Management within ESP contexts. Based on Bloom's revised taxonomy, this paper focuses on three higher-level cognitive processes: analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The paper discusses how these cognitive processes can be integrated into classroom activities to encourage students to engage more actively with learning tasks and apply their knowledge to practical event-planning situations. The paper also suggests several pedagogical strategies for implementing HOTS-based instruction, including case-based learning, problem-based learning, group discussions, and event planning projects. These approaches can support the development of critical thinking, creativity, and decision-making skills while also enhancing students' ability to use English in professional contexts.

Keywords— Bloom's Taxonomy, critical thinking, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Event Management, Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS).

1. Introduction

Higher education has increasingly emphasized the development of students' thinking capacities rather than merely delivering knowledge. Critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and decision making are commonly referred to as Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), and these abilities are now widely regarded as essential in the workplace.

Several studies have examined the relationship between HOTS and students' work readiness (Hasan & Pardjono, 2019). Research has also shown that memorization-based education rarely yields such talents. Instead, they tend to grow when learners are pushed to examine circumstances, weigh alternatives, and defend their choices (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). Loyens et al. (2023) reach a similar conclusion, stating that problem- and project-based learning environments can promote higher-order thinking when assignments require explanation, comparison, and reflection. These studies suggest that the development of HOTS depends not only on instructional methods but also on how learning tasks are structured. At the same time, the authors emphasize that these outcomes depend largely on how learning activities and assessment are designed.

Higher-order cognitive processes are especially relevant in professional and vocational disciplines, particularly in ESP courses related to fields such as Event Management. Planning an event involves analyzing objectives and audience needs, evaluating different strategies, and creating effective event concepts. Such tasks require the kind of reasoning and decision making associated with higher-order thinking. Consequently, integrating HOTS into Event Management enables students to develop both the analytical abilities and practical competence needed in professional contexts.

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Although HOTS has attracted growing attention in higher education, its application in Event Management teaching within ESP contexts remains relatively underexplored, particularly in relation to classroom teaching strategies. Given the practical nature of the field, approaches that encourage analysis, evaluation, and creative problem solving may be especially useful. This paper explores the role of HOTS in Event Management education and proposes several teaching strategies for ESP classrooms.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Bloom's Taxonomy and HOTS

Bloom's Taxonomy has long been used as a framework for understanding cognitive development in education. The original taxonomy identified six hierarchical levels of learning: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. In the revised version proposed by Anderson et al. (2001), these categories were modified to remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create. The first three levels are commonly referred to as lower-order thinking skills because they focus mainly on recalling and understanding information. In contrast, the last three levels—analyzing, evaluating, and creating—require learners to engage in more complex cognitive processes. These levels involve examining relationships among ideas, making judgments based on criteria, and generating new concepts or products.

Higher Order Thinking Skills are widely recognized as essential for meaningful learning because they encourage students to actively process information rather than simply memorizing facts. According to Brookhart (2010), HOTS involves the ability to transfer knowledge to new contexts, think critically about information, and solve complex problems. These skills enable learners to interpret information, evaluate different viewpoints, and create innovative solutions. Therefore, teaching strategies that encourage analysis, evaluation, and creative thinking are necessary to support the development of HOTS in classroom contexts.

2.2 HOTS and Student-Centered Learning

HOTS-oriented instruction is closely aligned with student-centered learning, an approach that emphasizes learners' active role in constructing knowledge. According to Nunan (2013 As Dudley-Evans & St John), student-centered learning enables learners to become aware of their learning objectives and to take greater responsibility for their learning process. Within this framework, teaching practices shift from teacher-dominated instruction to learning environments that encourage autonomy, critical inquiry, and active engagement.

Various pedagogical strategies have been suggested to promote HOTS in the classroom. These include constructivist learning, brainstorming, inquiry-based teaching, problem-based learning, and the use of thinking maps (Chia Chun & Binti Abdullah, 2019). Such approaches encourage learners to analyze information, generate ideas, and evaluate alternative solutions in meaningful learning contexts. In addition, HOTS plays an essential role in developing critical thinking abilities, enabling students to examine information carefully and avoid uncritical acceptance of misleading or inaccurate claims. By engaging learners in analytical and evaluative thinking, HOTS-based instruction helps them develop the capacity to make well-informed judgments based on evidence. Consequently, integrating HOTS into classroom activities supports the development of independent thinkers who are better prepared to address complex academic and real-world challenges.

2.3 HOTS in Event Management Education

In language education, particularly in ESP contexts, HOTS play an important role in helping learners apply language knowledge in academic and professional settings. ESP courses are typically designed around learners' specific communicative needs (Munby, 1978) and are often offered to students who already have a basic level of English proficiency. As Dudley-Evans & St John (1998) note, ESP instruction focuses not only on language itself but also on the communicative practices of a particular discipline. As a result, learners are frequently required to interpret information, evaluate options, and respond to practical situations, which makes the development of higher-order thinking particularly relevant in ESP learning.

One context in which the integration of HOTS can be especially meaningful is Event Management, a subject commonly offered in programs related to tourism, hospitality, or business. The subject typically covers key aspects of event planning and organization, including budgeting, marketing, and promotion. Beyond acquiring subject knowledge, students are often expected

to analyze event requirements, consider different planning strategies, and develop creative event concepts.

Because Event Management is closely linked to real-world practice, learning activities in this field naturally involve higher-level cognitive processes. Tasks such as problem solving, case analysis, group discussion, and project-based event planning can encourage students to examine situations critically and make informed decisions. In ESP classrooms, these tasks not only develop subject knowledge but also provide opportunities for learners to practice professional communication in English. In this sense, integrating HOTS into Event Management instruction can support both language development and professional competence within ESP contexts by allowing learners to use English in authentic professional situations while engaging in higher-order thinking.

3. Implication

To translate these theoretical benefits into actual classroom practice, HOTS can be incorporated into Event Management teaching through classroom activities that encourage students to think beyond basic recall, particularly through tasks that require analysis, evaluation, and problem solving (Brookhart, 2010). Such activities relate to the higher levels of Bloom's revised taxonomy—analyzing, evaluating, and creating—where learners examine information, make judgments, and develop new ideas in practical contexts. In this process, the instructor plays an important role in designing tasks, guiding discussion, and encouraging students to reflect on their decisions.

The examples discussed here are adapted from scenarios presented in Successful Event Management: A Practical Handbook (Shone & Parry, 2019).

At the analyzing stage, students examine different aspects of event planning and explore how various elements interact. For instance, they may study successful or unsuccessful events to identify factors that influenced the outcomes. This process encourages students to consider issues such as target audiences, marketing strategies, venue selection, and logistical planning while developing a clearer understanding of how events are organized.

Moving to the evaluating level, students compare alternative strategies and make decisions based on specific criteria. Classroom discussions may involve assessing promotional approaches, selecting suitable venues, or considering the feasibility of different planning options. Through these tasks, students learn to justify their choices and think critically about possible solutions.

Finally, students move to the creating stage, where they apply their ideas in more practical tasks. One example is a group project in which students design a complete event proposal that includes objectives, target audiences, promotional strategies, and logistical plans. Such projects allow students to combine analytical and evaluative thinking while developing workable event concepts.

To illustrate this creating stage in a practical classroom setting, teachers can introduce a specific scenario, such as an "Eco-Friendly Product Launch" project. In this activity, the instructor divides the class into small groups and provides a specific brief: a company is launching a new line of sustainable products and requires an innovative launch event with a limited budget. First, applying analytical skills, students must analyze the brand's core environmental values, the target audience's demographics, and the financial constraints. Next, engaging their evaluative skills, groups compare potential venues and marketing channels, for instance, weighing the pros and cons of an outdoor botanical garden versus an indoor convention center with green certifications. Finally, at the creating level, students collaboratively design a comprehensive event proposal outlining the event theme, timeline, logistical arrangements, and risk management plan. This scenario engages students in all three higher-order thinking processes while exposing them to realistic event management situations. In addition, presenting and defending their event proposals in front of classmates allows students to develop communication skills and professional confidence.

In the end, these HOTS-driven activities' actual worth goes well beyond the boundaries of a particular classroom assignment. ESP teachers are doing much more than just teaching language when they regularly put learners in scenarios where they have to assess risks, examine variables, and come up with workable solutions under simulated constraints. They are developing cognitive flexibility. Learners bridge the crucial gap between academic English and professional survival by learning to negotiate

ambiguity and make evidence-based decisions. The position of the educator is also significantly redefined by this educational change. Teachers become mentors in the sector instead of just language assessors. Their main responsibility becomes maintaining an ongoing cycle of critical inquiry rather than merely fixing grammar or vocabulary. They accomplish this by forcing students to justify a risky logistical decision or by posing pointed questions when a group's marketing plan appears to be poor. Because of this dynamic, the ESP classroom becomes more than just a place to practice language; it becomes a true incubator for professional identity, preparing students to think, adapt, and behave as event managers in the real world.

4. Conclusion

Integrating Higher Order Thinking Skills into Event Management teaching can support students in developing analytical, evaluative, and creative abilities that are essential for professional practice. In ESP classrooms, learning activities such as case analysis, problem-based tasks, group discussions, and event planning projects can encourage students to apply language and subject knowledge to realistic situations. These approaches help shift the classroom from knowledge transmission to active learning, allowing students to engage with practical problems and make informed decisions. Therefore, the integration of HOTS in Event Management education plays a crucial role in equipping students with the competencies required for success in the modern event industry.

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