Learning Through Experience: Exploring Malaysian Teachers' Learning Cycle of English Language Classroom-based Assessment

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https://doi.org/10.61211/mjqr110203

ABSTRACT

Classroom-based assessment (CBA) is a crucial component in teaching and learning, as it not only develops teachers' teaching skills but also informs students' learning progress. Despite its significance, previous research has consistently reported that teachers encounter considerable challenges in implementing CBA effectively, often attributed to limitations in their knowledge, skills, and assessment-related practices. Therefore, there is a need to explore the learning cycle of CBA among teachers to identify existing knowledge gaps among selected teachers. This study adopts Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle as a theoretical framework to explore each participant's personalised journey of CBA knowledge through the four cyclical stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. This qualitative study employs a phenomenographic case study involving three English language teachers from three urban primary schools in a district of Selangor. The data gathered from two interview sessions, classroom audio recordings, and documents were transcribed and analysed using codes that align with previous studies and the literature. The findings indicated that participants who completed the learning cycle were able to develop and restructure their CBA knowledge by linking experiences from each stage, as reflected in their extensive CBA knowledge. Despite completing the learning cycle, participants demonstrated varying CBA knowledge, skills, and practices. These differences were shaped by their distinct learning experiences, influenced by contextual factors such as the classroom environment, students' language proficiency, and resource availability. In contrast, one participant who skipped selected stage(s) or did not complete the cycle demonstrated limited or superficial knowledge of CBA. This study makes a significant contribution to informing policymakers and educators about the importance of completing each stage in the learning cycle, as the experience gained from each stage contributes to new knowledge of CBA and/or enhances their current understanding of CBA.

Keywords: Classroom-based assessment, experience, knowledge, learning cycle, variation

Article Info:
Received: 1 July 2025
Accepted: 31 Aug 2025
Published: 30 November 2025

INTRODUCTION

Classroom-based assessment (CBA) has been widely recognised as a fundamental element in the teaching and learning process (Abdul Razak et al., 2023; Rust, 2002; Yan et al., 2021; Yusoff et al., 2025). Black and Wiliam (1998) describe it as the "heart of effective teaching" (p. 116) simply because it is an "ongoing process which requires both teacher and students to interact to promote greater learning" (Butler & McMunn, 2006, p. 2). Beyond supporting pedagogical effectiveness, CBA serves a diagnostic function, enabling learners to monitor their academic progress and informing instructional decision-making. Since several nations have already implemented CBA, several researchers have proposed definitions of the term. Essentially, this study aims to adapt the definition by Hill and McNamara (2012), which defines CBA as the "yardstick for teachers (and/or learners) to improve teaching and learning while providing feedback" (p. 397). Therefore, it is evident that practice, feedback, and assessing students are among the important components of CBA. This definition, along with the key concepts of CBA, helps align this study and provides a clearer understanding of how teachers construct their CBA knowledge. Apart from these concepts, reporting, managing, and socialising are also significant in CBA. Given the scope and

duration of this study, it is infeasible to cover all aspects of CBA. Therefore, to adhere to the purpose of this study, which is to explore teachers' learning cycle of CBA, it is essential to focus on the academic aspects of CBA (teaching and learning) rather than its socialisation aspects.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

In the past, the learning context in Malaysian classrooms was examination-driven and mostly teacher-centred, with students' skills often tested through timed writing assessments. Timed-writing assessments are tests in which students are given a set amount of time to write on an assigned topic without teacher assistance (Majid, 2011; Marzaini et al., 2024). Explicitly, timed-writing tests provide minimal opportunities for students to receive feedback and reflect on their mistakes, which contradicts the Malaysian curriculum syllabus that aims to provide "continuous formative evaluation (and provide) important feedback for learners' progress" (Ministry of Education Malaysia [MOEM], 2003, p. 4). The timed-writing assessment in the Malaysian English language classroom primarily focuses on writing and reading skills, with less attention to listening and speaking, which is unlikely to yield a holistic assessment. Since Malaysia's National Philosophy of Education emphasises student-centred learning, the Ministry of Education (MOE) took a step to implement School-Based Assessment (SBA) in all schools in 2011.

In the Malaysian context, some teachers remain unclear about the concept of CBA and its implementation during lessons (John, 2018; Jonglai, 2017; Latif, 2021; Yusoff et al., 2025). The study conducted by Latif (2021) echoed the lack of assessment knowledge among teachers, especially language teachers. Specifically, teachers should be aware of how to effectively carry out lessons, design and adapt suitable activities for students, and report feedback systematically. Most teachers believe that designing tasks is the most crucial element in CBA. However, while the task given to students is important, detailed feedback — both written and verbal — as well as teaching practices are equally vital for CBA. In other words, apart from equipping themselves with the content and principles of CBA, teachers should also possess pedagogical knowledge of CBA when conducting assessments with students.

Based on the findings from previous studies on CBA, there is a need to explore teachers' learning cycle of CBA (Arumugham & Abdullah, 2016; John, 2018; Jonglai, 2017; Khamis & Selamat, 2019; Khory et al., 2021; Latif, 2021; Lee et al., 2020). The findings from previous studies illustrate that teachers in Malaysia still struggle to implement CBA effectively, especially in English Language classrooms due to a lack of knowledge and skills in the field of CBA, albeit a specific circular on CBA was given to all schools by MOE, Malaysia in 2017 (Brown, 2004; Curriculum Development Centre, 2016; Hill & McNamara, 2012; Hock et al., 2022; Hsia & Nasri, 2022; Latif, 2021; Malakolunthu & Sim, 2011; Marzaini et al., 2023). Essentially, teachers in Malaysia seem to lack confidence in implementing CBA during English lessons and are unable to grade students effectively due to a poor understanding of the marking scheme (Hasim et al., 2018; Sidhu et al., 2018). Thus, a logical step is to understand the teachers' learning cycle to identify gaps in their CBA knowledge. This involves not only exploring what teachers currently know and what they need to learn about CBA, but also investigating how they construct and develop their knowledge. By gaining insights into how teachers construct their CBA knowledge, policymakers can recognise the strengths and weaknesses in the current support teachers receive through the CBA initiatives.

Policymakers and stakeholders would then be better able to follow up with actions, solutions, and training to assist teachers in implementing CBA effectively in classrooms. This approach is not about prescribing actions but about building an understanding of how teachers construct knowledge. Without understanding the teachers' CBA learning cycle, addressing the reasons for teachers' lack of knowledge and issues related to CBA will be challenging, resulting in CBA being practiced ineffectively in classrooms. Although it is accepted that CBA is a powerful instructional approach, it cannot be implemented unless teachers understand its concepts and are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to practice it effectively (Chapman & Snyder, 2000).

This study aims to explore teachers' learning cycle of CBA through their individual experiences, leading to the following research questions:

1. What are the stages in the CBA learning cycle as experienced by teachers?
2. How do teachers' learning experiences at each stage contribute to the development of new CBA knowledge?

Theoretical Framework: Kolb's Experiential Learning Model

Based on several readings, a few philosophers and scholars have made significant contributions to the theory of experiential learning. In other words, a growing body of research exists on experiential learning. These scholars include William James, John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, David Kolb and Lev Vygotsky (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). William James (1904) introduced the concept of experiential learning: "the flow of experience" (Kolb & Kolb, 2017, p. 10), which John Dewey later developed. Dewey (1938) firmly believed that it is essential to come up with a "theory of experience in order that education may be intelligently conducted upon the basis of experience" (p. 23); therefore, they proposed that the flow of experience should be cyclical. Following this, David Kolb (1984) reflected on Dewey's (1938) theory and developed an experiential learning model for adult learners, which explains the process of adult learning through experiences. A recent study by Seaman et al. (2017) strongly supports this statement, as it states that Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle provides the "clearest expression" (p. 3) of experiential learning. Hence, Figure 1 below outlines a brief explanation of Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning, informing readers about the process and serving as the main theory underpinning this study.

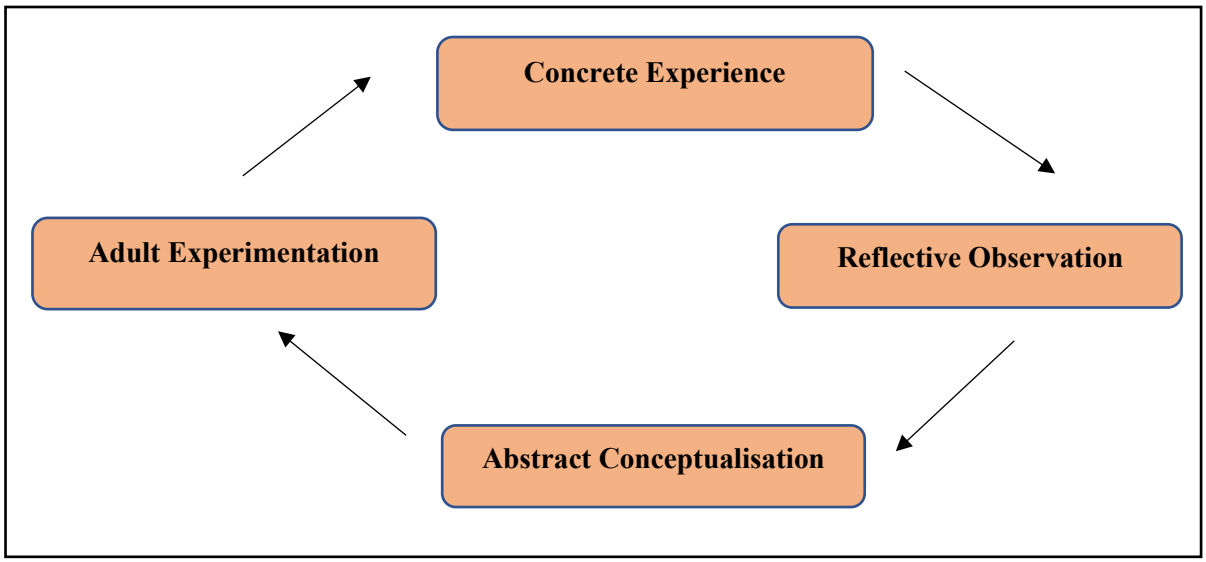


Figure 1: Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Model

The Experiential Learning Model illustrated in the figure above was developed by Kolb (1984, p. 141). Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle is perhaps the most scholarly, influential, and cited model regarding experiential learning theory (Kolb et al., 2001; Morris, 2019). In the model presented above, Kolb (1984) clearly outlined four stages of the learning process. This includes concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. Precisely, adult learners learn differently in relation to their previous experiences, skills and abilities. Kolb (1984) also emphasised that the cycle is flexible, allowing individuals to begin at any stage and continue through the sequence from that point onward.

METHOD

Design

A qualitative research design using a phenomenographic case-study approach is applied in this study. A phenomenographic case-study approach provides the opportunity to delve into participants' experiences, which closely aligns with the purpose of this study: to explore teachers' experiences of their learning cycle in CBA (Barnard et al., 1999; Chong, 2020; Marton, 2005). Since there is a need to "fence in" the phenomenon being explored and to obtain thick and in-depth data on selected teacher's experiences on their knowledge and understanding of CBA within a "bounded system", the proposed method of this study is best termed as a phenomenological case-study approach, whereby case-study is used as a generic term, only to determine the boundary of the context being explored (Merriam, 2009, p. 40).

Research Setting

This study was conducted in three urban Malaysian national primary schools located in one of the districts in Selangor, referred to as District I. A recent large-scale quantitative survey by the Malaysian Curriculum Centre

(2021), involving 160,000 teachers nationwide, reveals that teachers still lack the readiness, knowledge, and skills to implement CBA effectively during lessons. Although the findings are generalisable to Selangor state and, to a lesser extent, to Malaysia as a whole, the teachers' voices were presented numerically (percentages), which hindered their ability to express how they construct their CBA knowledge. To address this limitation, a qualitative study among selected teachers in Selangor state is needed to delve into their experiences with the CBA learning cycle, which may be transferable to other states for future studies.

Due to limited time and resources, this study aims to focus on one district (District I) out of nine in the state of Selangor. It was chosen based on the average number of studies on CBA implementation (Paramasivam & Ratnavadivel, 2018; Sethupathy et al., 2018; Yuh & Kenayathulla, 2020). Given the nature and sensitivity of the data, the researcher chose to keep the district's name anonymous. Since this is a phenomenographic case study, District I serves as the study's boundary. Three typical Malaysian primary schools from District I were selected because CBA is widely implemented in primary classrooms, particularly in lower primary (Hock et al., 2022).

Participants

Since this is a qualitative, phenomenographic case study, three Year 3 English teachers were purposefully selected as a sample to obtain an in-depth understanding of how individual teachers construct their knowledge of CBA (Karim & Mashudi, 2022; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Rather than generalising the findings across populations, the goal of a phenomenographic study is to identify and describe the variation across participants' experiences. As such, the three carefully selected participants are ideal for yielding rich, meaningful categories of description within a specific context (Taylor-Beswick & Hornung, 2024).

The participants were recommended by their principals and purposefully selected based on criteria, including CBA teaching experience, academic qualifications, training, courses attended related to CBA, and their availability and willingness to participate in this study. This is to ensure that participants provide "richly descriptive" (Merriam, 2009, p. 16) data within the scope of this study. One criterion for selecting participants is that they be practising CBA in their respective classrooms. The following criterion is that all three teachers must have at least 5 years of teaching experience and be specialised in English language teaching. All three participants are exposed to CBA in-house training conducted within their school.

The demographic profile of these participants is tabulated in Table 1 below. To protect participants' identities, all names were replaced with pseudonyms. Any data collected throughout this study will not be made available for purposes other than this research study.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Educational Background	Teaching Experience	CBA-related Courses
Bella	Female	30	B.Ed. TESL	6 years	Few courses & in-house training
Daisy	Female	57	Diploma in English	33 years	Frequent courses & in-house training
Emily	Female	45	Diploma in English	21 years	In-house training

Data Gathering

This study used interviews, classroom recordings, and documents to gather data. Interview data play a significant role in this phenomenographic case study, as the two interview sessions revealed the meanings of the participants' experiences, thus allowing the 'variation' (ways of experiencing) to emerge (Chong, 2020). One interview session was conducted before the classroom recording to gather teachers' demographic details, knowledge, and understanding of CBA. Then, after the classroom recording, another session with each participant was arranged to explore CBA practices (how tasks are designed, feedback is given, and students are assessed), with close reference to examples from the participant's classroom. The entire interview session with all participants was audio-recorded, which is the most common method for preserving participants' insights (Merriam, 2009).

Simultaneously, using the participants as proxies, all three English language teachers' classes were audio-recorded to understand how CBA is conducted during the teaching and learning process. These audio recordings were conducted during various visits, depending on participants' availability (Kawulich, 2012). All the audio recordings were transcribed for data analysis (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). Apart from that, documents such as samples of

activities, students' work, test papers, English panel reports, CBA meeting reports, students' scoring sheets, daily lesson plans, and participants' reflective journals were taken into account to use as a source of reference to understand how the participant implements CBA during lessons based on his/her experiences.

DATA ANALYSIS

Based on Marton and Booth's (1997) detailed explanation of the phenomenographic research method, Brew (2001) simplified and expanded on three essential steps for conducting a phenomenographic data analysis. In a specific context, based on Marton and Booth's (1997), Brew's (2001) phenomenographic data analysis steps were incorporated to "trace the pattern of how the phenomenon is experienced across the participant set" (Chong, 2014, p. 78), which forms a collective meaning of selected participants' experience on their learning cycle of CBA.

Firstly, the raw data were categorised into interview sessions, classroom recordings and documents. Then, each data source was scrutinised to remove any overlapping, repetitive, or irrelevant data. The remaining data obtained from this process were used to address the study's research questions. Again, this process is never-ending, continuing until the data is thoroughly analysed and presented. Then, individual participants' learning cycles were coded.

Following this step, participants' experiences of their learning cycle were mapped into categories, resulting in thematically clustered categories that developed the core themes of their experiences. Marton and Booth (1997) refer to this type of coding process as "categories of description" (p. 176), in which common and repeated responses serve as a basis for establishing relationships between them. In this step, links across different data sources were used to substantiate the finding. As such, common patterns from interview sessions, classroom recordings and documents (students' progress reports, journals, homework) were identified to triangulate the data collected (Langdridge, 2007; Maykut & Morehouse, 2003). Although the findings were based on the researcher's interpretation, a second-order perspective, they were substantiated with other forms of data collection to preserve the participants' experience. The data gathered was cross-checked with each participant to ensure the researcher's interpretation aligned with their thoughts.

Trustworthiness

Steps taken to enhance the trustworthiness of this study include triangulation, member checking, and peer review. A range of data-gathering methods, including interviews, classroom recordings, and document analysis, were employed to confirm each teacher's individual experiences and strengthen the study's emerging findings. The collected data were confirmed and cross-checked using multiple methods to reduce uncertainty in the researchers' interpretation, thereby enhancing the data's believability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Saat & Fadzil, 2019). The data was triangulated using multiple interview sessions and a range of documents.

Next, member checking was used not only to preserve participants' voices but also to validate that the researcher's interpretations were fair and reasonable (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). The research instruments, primarily interviews, were enhanced by having an external person review the data. Insights from the panel of experts were considered to improve the credibility of the instruments used in this study.

Ethical Considerations

This study received ethical approval from the university's research ethics committee (UM. TNC2/UMREC_2927). Approval was also obtained from the Ministry of Education, Malaysia, to conduct the research in selected Malaysian primary schools [KPM. 600-3/2/3-eras (17297)]. All procedures were conducted in accordance with institutional and national ethical guidelines. Participants' privacy rights were respected, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement. The selected teacher participants were given a consent form to explain their roles and the scope of this study. The consent form clearly states that participation in this study is voluntary, and they may withdraw at any time if they are not comfortable providing their views or serving as a proxy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study will be outlined in greater detail in the following sections. The three primary school teachers were selected as participants in this study. All three demonstrated varying levels of CBA knowledge, skills, and practices, as the experiences gained at each stage of the learning cycle uniquely shaped their understanding. Compared to Emily, Daisy and Bella appear to have completed all stages of the learning cycle, which enabled them to develop and restructure their CBA knowledge.

Case 1: Bella
Bella's concrete experience with CBA is shaped primarily by her prior understanding of assessment, her college knowledge, and her interpretation of current readings on CBA. Based on these experiences, she constructs her understanding of CBA and implements it in "my(her) own way," which she feels suits her students (Bella, Interview Session 1, Line 130-131). For instance, Bella reflected that the CBA band systems for assessing students are too broad, so she assesses according to her own way. As such, Bella assigned bands to her students based on their dominant skill rather than assessing each skill individually, as stated in the policy. Bella's objective was to assess her students' speaking skills, but when the student was not fluent in the language, she "gives and takes."

Thus, the band assigned to this student is based on their spelling ability, rather than their speaking ability. During the interview, she made it quite evident that she must "improvise it (the rubric). You lack this part. I will see another skill" (Bella, Interview Session 1, Line 246-248). As such, her students' final band may be based on the weightage of one skill rather than an average of all four (writing, reading, speaking, and listening). In other words, for this example, Bella completed the four stages in the learning cycle based on her interpretation of the band descriptor, which has informed how she assesses her students. Upon reflection, she advanced to the next stage, the abstract conceptualisation stage, to refine the rubric and use it to assess her students (active experimentation). Based on her experience, she improvised on the analytic rubric provided by MOEM and created her own, which she used to assess her students. In Bella's cyclical learning cycle for CBA, she actively develops, improves, and modifies her CBA practices through reflection and experimentation with various CBA approaches.

Case 2: Daisy
In terms of Daisy's concrete experience, she relies mainly on her previous knowledge of conducting classroom activities, which she refers to as CBA "with new names" (Daisy, Interview Session 1, Line 146). Daisy, a senior teacher and the Head of the English Panel in her school, is confident she has adequate knowledge about assessment and CBA. Explicitly, Daisy said she has been "doing these (CBA activities) for donkey years. I(she) just did not know the terms" (Daisy, Interview Session 1, Line 143-144). Apart from her prior knowledge, she also refers to the CBA policy and the provided syllabus. However, she only uses these documents "as guidance" to give her ideas and keep her on track (Daisy, Interview Session 1, Line 55).

Daisy's prior knowledge of assessment has made it easy for her to interpret the CBA guidebook, which explains why she has easily assimilated the new CBA assessment. When asked if Daisy reflects on her CBA practices, she said, "No. I know that…I am very sorry…I know that I have failed it" (Daisy, Interview Session 1, Line 124-125). Nevertheless, she did not realise that she was subconsciously reflecting on her CBA practices. She may not go through the detailed process of reflection, as her experiences for the past 33 years have equipped her with the confidence and knowledge of knowing what to do, which was explained in her statement, "but I know what to do" (Daisy, Interview Session 1, Line 116-117). Perhaps she has been teaching for a long time and has undergone many changes in the English language syllabus from "*KBSR, KSSR,* and now *CEFR*" (Daisy, Interview Session 1, Line 164). These acronyms refer to *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah* (Integrated Primary School Curriculum), *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah* (Primary School Standard Curriculum), and the Common European Framework of Reference, respectively. For instance, she feels CBA is less practical to conduct in school due to the large number of students.

While other teachers view this as a challenge and a hindrance to conducting CBA, she overcame this by engaging her students in group work during the abstract conceptualisation stage. Daisy made the knowledgeable students "lead the weaker ones" (Daisy, Interview Session 1, Line 39). Weaker students are encouraged to participate in the CBA tasks through group work, as their peers can provide guidance. "It (this method) works for me(her)", according to Daisy, who explains that she sees improvement among her students after experimenting with her thoughts (Daisy, Interview Session 1, Line 49-50). Although she was unaware of her reflection practices, Daisy's learning process is evident as she has progressed from reflecting on the issue, conceptualising a solution for the said issue, and putting her thoughts into practice, which gave her new knowledge that group work helps in managing a large number of students during CBA tasks.

Case 3: Emily
Emily's concrete experience with CBA primarily stems from her prior knowledge of teaching, conducting assessments, and serving as an examiner, along with minimal input from her readings and in-house training. She shared that the in-house training provided during the early stages of CBA implementation focused on introducing the concepts of CBA and "not so much on how to carry out CBA in the classrooms" (Emily, Interview Session 1, Line 22-23). She feels she lacks hands-on training in conducting CBA activities in a large classroom with 40 students, including those with low language proficiency and diverse learning abilities. Emily claims she reflects

on her CBA practices, but her examples of reflection suggest otherwise. Emily said she does not fully understand how to assess CBA and reflected on how to address this. She appeared to rely on her prior knowledge to assess her students on CBA-related tasks. Emily demonstrated that she values her experience as an examiner and feels she has the authority to use it to assess the CBA written tasks, rather than referring to the band descriptors. She believes that she can assess her students' reading and writing skills based on her previous experience as an examiner and her exposure to conventional written assessments.

Although the CBA band descriptors were provided to her, she trusts her previous experience as an examiner to assess her students' work rather than attempting to interpret the CBA marking guidelines. However, Emily finds it difficult to assess her students' listening and speaking skills as her previous experience as an examiner did not equip her with such skills. Emily explained that the descriptors in the CBA marking guide do not provide sufficient details for assessing students' listening and speaking skills, which are inherently subjective. Since assessing listening and speaking skills is relatively new and was only introduced with the implementation of CBA, she is less familiar with this process. She prefers "marks…the old days," which are specific and measurable rather than referring to the CBA band descriptors (Emily, Interview Session 2, Line 82-83). Her decision not to refer to the CBA marking descriptors explains why Emily struggles to assess her students' listening and speaking tasks.

Cross-case Analysis

In summary, the three cases present an interesting contrast among three teachers working in the same district, teaching the same grade and syllabus. Unlike Emily, Bella and Daisy appeared to complete all four stages in the learning cycle proposed by Kolb (1984). As such, Emily's opportunity to learn and improve his CBA knowledge is somewhat limited as compared to Bella's and Daisy's. By skipping those tasks, Emily prevented herself from gaining new CBA knowledge. The experience Bella gained at each stage helped her reinforce, restructure, and construct new CBA knowledge. Bella also reinforced her CBA knowledge by putting her thoughts into practice through active experimentation. On the other hand, Daisy demonstrated evidence of CBA knowledge construction when she effortlessly integrated the new information (CBA) with her existing knowledge of conventional assessment. Notably, Daisy builds on her CBA knowledge by making meaningful connections across stages. Since she has undergone several changes in assessment by MOEM, she has experimented with various ways of assessing students and has developed her knowledge of CBA through her experimentation. Daisy also restructured, strengthened, and reinforced her CBA knowledge by relating the experience gained at each stage to her previous knowledge.

DISCUSSION

Knowledge is Constructed through Experience

The variation in participants' CBA learning cycle is due to their individual learning experience based on Kolb's (1984) learning cycle, which includes concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Participants who complete the learning cycle tend to have more opportunities to reflect on, experiment with, and improve their CBA practices, leading to a deeper understanding of CBA than those who struggle to complete the cycle or skip certain stages.

Daisy, Bella, and Emily consider themselves experts, but their individual experiences influence their self-perception. In analysis, Daisy and Bella see themselves as experts and are confident in their CBA knowledge, practices, and ability to assess students. Audio recordings from classroom practices and documents substantiated their views. Notably, Bella and Daisy are manifestations of Kurt's (2021) analysis that "knowledge is constructed based on experience" (p. 1). Despite being the youngest participant, Bella, with six years of teaching experience, completed the CBA learning cycle, just like Daisy. However, Daisy appeared to be able to critically evaluate her CBA challenges and come up with suitable solutions compared to Bella because Daisy's experience throughout her 33 years of teaching has allowed her to interact and reflect on various situations, which adds to her existing knowledge (Harper & Ross, 2011; Lebert & Vilarroya, 2021; Matsuo, 2015; Othman, 2018; Pitchard & Wollard, 2010; Seaman, 2008). Compared with Bella, who chose to conduct the CBA in her own way. As such, Bella took this opportunity to reflect on and experiment with her CBA ideas, thereby constructing CBA knowledge.

Additionally, the findings revealed that Daisy had constructed significant CBA knowledge compared to the other participants, as she was responsible for her own learning and actively experimented with her CBA practices. Though Daisy and Bella consistently made improvements through their active reflection and experimentation with CBA activities, Bouchrika (2022) mentioned that characteristics such as Daisy's "stubbornness" show her curiosity, urge to seek challenging tasks and solve her CBA-related issues. Based on the data collected, Daisy did not realise she was reflecting. However, she was able to immediately put her knowledge into practice because

completing her CBA learning cycle developed her "sensing", "thinking", and "action" (Beard & Wilson, 2005, p. 17).

Unlike Bella, Daisy has gained experience as Head of the English Panel, which has enhanced her CBA knowledge. To be an expert, Daisy believes she needs sufficient CBA knowledge to mentor her colleagues on CBA-related issues effectively. Thus, she acknowledges that she needs to be "independent, self-directed and autonomous" (Knowles, 1980, p. 43) in interacting with the CBA inputs gained from her readings, courses, and experience. On the other hand, Bella chose to conduct CBA independently based on her interpretation of the CBA guidebook, but some of Bella's CBA practices do not align with the CBA guidebook, like Daisy's. However, some scholars claim that this practice is acceptable because CBA is subjective, and teachers are encouraged to personalise their CBA practices to adhere to students' needs and abilities as long as learning is evident (Hill & McNamara, 2011; Malakolunthu & Sim, 2010; Norhasim & Mohamad, 2020; Sidhu et al., 2018; Tee et al., 2018).

Likewise, Emily also views herself as an expert in CBA, particularly in evaluating her students' writing tasks. Though Emily is not as confident in her CBA knowledge as Daisy and Bella, she values her previous experience as an examiner and marker in assessing her students' writing tasks. Most likely, Emily sees herself as an expert because only a handful are chosen to be markers, and she is one of them. Despite having more teaching experience than Bella and Daisy, Emily did not complete the learning cycle as they did. As such, although she claimed to be an expert, Emily did not develop significant CBA knowledge because she lacked experience experimenting with her CBA practices.

Thus, her CBA knowledge is inadequate compared to Daisy's and Bella's. Despite acknowledging the subjectivity of CBA, Emily's reliance on her previous knowledge as an examiner and a marker, while disregarding the current CBA band descriptors to assess her students' writing tasks, is unacceptable to some scholars (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002). Emily did not refer to the CBA band descriptors or seek additional CBA knowledge because she considered herself an expert and was complacent with her current understanding of how to assess her students using the CBA.

This overly comfortable attitude becomes a reliability issue when Emily, overconfidently, believes she knows how to assess her students' CBA writing tasks (Yusoff et al., 2025). This also explains why there is no significant knowledge construction in Emily's learning cycle. Emily's lack of curiosity about the current CBA assessment hindered her ability to deepen her CBA knowledge. Unlike Daisy and Bella, Emily rarely experimented with her CBA practices; instead, she relied on her previous teaching and learning experiences. Though her previous learning experience was meaningful and valuable, it does not apply to the current CBA assessment. Emily may have been an expert in assessing her students' previous writing tasks, but her 'expert' experience does not apply to this current CBA practice, as CBA involves more than just writing.

In Emily's case, it appeared she neglected to assess her students' oral skills, as her previous experience had focused only on writing, not listening and speaking. In parallel, Norhasim and Muhamad (2020) argued in their study that "oral incompetency among ESL learners" (p. 1924) results from the neglect of speaking and listening skills, along with an emphasis on reading and writing skills. Thus, Emily's practice of evaluating her students based on her prior experience, while overlooking the current CBA band descriptor, yields unreliable results because she is assessing them on a single skill (writing) (Sidhu et al., 2018).

Though Bella assessed her students in her own way, she evaluated all four English skills, although her method differed from the CBA guidebook. Assessing students' oral skills requires "a lot of knowledge, skill, experience, training and practice, which is difficult even for experienced teachers" (Norhasim & Muhamad, 2020, p. 1925). Yusoff et al. (2025) also mentioned that some teachers presume they have sufficient CBA knowledge to assess students. However, they may overlook the exact requirements for assessing students. This is why teachers are highly encouraged to refer to the CBA criteria when assessing students' CBA. As such, Emily, who relies solely on her previous experience to assess her students' CBA tasks, is not considered an expert because her assessment method does not align with the CBA guidebook. Thus, to summarise, it would appear that knowledge is constructed through experience.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, the variation in teachers' learning cycles was apparent because each participant's experience was unique, reflecting their varied prior experiences. Essentially, extensive teaching experience does not necessarily make one an expert, as knowledge is constructed through meaningful events that contribute to learning and

change. At the same time, one should also possess the maturity to discern which meaningful experience applies to the current situation, enabling the effective implementation of CBA.

This study focused on exploring teachers' learning cycle of CBA. For future studies, in addition to exploring teachers' experiences in their CBA learning cycle, it is also worth considering students' experiences in CBA. Hall (2015) acknowledged that students' perspectives are often overlooked and emphasised the importance of exploring students' views when evaluating the effectiveness of a particular education policy or teaching practice. Acknowledging students' voices creates a positive impression among parents, encouraging them to play a more active role in their children's CBA activities. Understanding how students learn may provide teachers with insights to improve their CBA practices, leading to more student-centred reform. In this way, teachers can identify the challenges students face in their CBA activities and provide assistance to help them progress.

Indeed, findings from exploring students' experiences inform teachers' understanding of student diversity. Each student learns and progresses differently, allowing teachers to address educational gaps among students from diverse social backgrounds, abilities, and cultures. As such, students' needs are addressed. Furthermore, capturing students' lived experiences in the CBA learning cycles may provide policymakers with essential insights, especially in evaluating the practicality of textbook content and CBA activities. Hence, this leads policymakers to make informed decisions to enhance the relevance of CBA practices.

LIMITATION OF STUDY

A phenomenographic case study method was employed in this study to examine selected English teachers' experiences with their CBA learning cycle. Since a comprehensive investigation is necessary to document the experiences of selected teachers, the number of participants in this study is limited (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). As such, the findings of this study are based on the experiences of three Year 3 English teachers. The selected research design for this study is a phenomenographic case study, which necessitates careful participant selection to ensure valid comparisons of their experiences across their CBA learning cycle.

As such, this study focuses exclusively on teachers practising CBA in Year 3 classrooms. The limited number of teachers and the research context may not permit the researcher to generalise the findings beyond these participants and this context. Although this study does not aim to generalise the findings, the results may be transferable to other contexts, settings, or participants, should readers decide to do so (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Hence, the limited number of participants chosen was sufficient to address the proposed research questions for this study.

Another limitation of this study is the data-gathering method, which did not include classroom observations. Due to the requirement established by the Malaysian Educational Planning and Research Division, researchers were not allowed to conduct classroom observations in any Malaysian schools. As such, this research lacked data from an in-situ environment, which would have been an added advantage in substantiating participants' experiences in their knowledge construction of CBA. To address this limitation, the researcher obtained participants' assistance as proxies to audio-record their CBA lessons. Following their audio-recorded lessons, participants were interviewed informally about their CBA practices (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). These informal conversations, following their CBA lessons, provided participants with opportunities to share and clarify classroom instances that occurred during their CBA practices. In this way, the limitations of this study were manageable.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

The findings indicate to teachers the importance of completing the stages in the learning cycle proposed by Kolb (1984), thus increasing their opportunities to construct significant CBA knowledge through the experiences gained at each stage. This study suggests that meaningful learning occurs when learners connect their experiences to prior learning and effectively restructure their knowledge. In other words, completing the stages in isolation, without connecting and integrating the experiences gained, does not necessarily lead to knowledge construction. Drawing on the findings of this study, a training framework is proposed to enhance teachers' understanding of their roles at each stage of the learning cycle, thereby aiding the construction of practical CBA knowledge. In addition to emphasising teachers' roles, this framework outlines the actions required between the learning cycle stages to promote progress from one stage to the next. Figure 2 below presents the proposed training framework of teachers' roles in the learning cycle.

Concrete Experience
(being open to, aware of and valuing experience)
- Collect information about CBA content
- Collect information about students' learning
- Ensure multiple sources of information (in-house training, peer support group, independent search)
- Ensure multiple methods of information (observation, inquiry, reflection, test)

1. What input was given?

2. What role is played by you or others (administrators, English panel)?

3. What help do you need? (PLC, coaching)

Reflective Observation
(making use, investigating experience, use of feelings, intuition, ideas and options)
- Identify long-term and short-term goals
- Establish standards and criteria (learning goal)
- Reflect on the input received in relation to external factors (classroom size, students' proficiency, resources)

1. What was good and bad about the experience?

2. Make a judgement and discuss its implications

3. Draw upon theory from textbooks for planning CBA activities.

Abstract Conceptualisation
(analysing and creating meaning from experience)
- Analyse assessment information
- Select appropriate assessment in relation to curriculum, syllabus and policy
- Plan assessment (integrate assessment with teaching and learning)
- Check for the validity and reliability of the assessment

1. How could it be adopted in the classroom context?

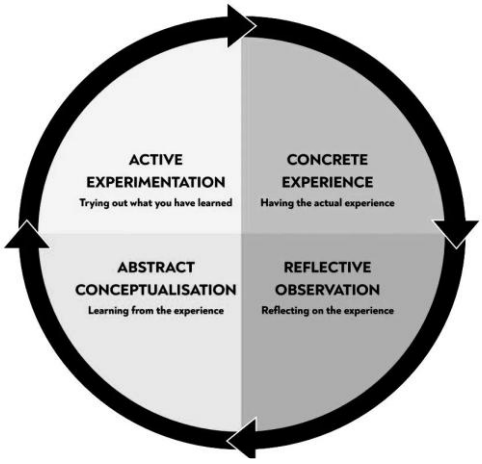
2. What are the potential challenges?

3. Make backup plans

Active Experimentation
(prepare for action and try things out)
- Maximise students' involvement
- Work on weaknesses (what did not work out)
- Take note of strength
- Take note of recommendations
- Accept constructive feedback
- Decide what to do with feedback, judgements

1. What sense can you make of the situation? What else could you have done?

2. What did you learn? Assess the impact on you and your future action
***Action plan:** If this situation arose again, what would you do?



Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle

Figure 2: Proposed Training Framework: Teachers' Roles in the Learning Cycle

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE STUDY

This study focused on exploring teachers' learning cycle of CBA. For future studies, in addition to exploring teachers' experiences in their CBA learning cycle, it is also worth considering students' experiences in CBA. Hall (2015) acknowledged that students' perspectives are often overlooked and emphasised the importance of exploring students' views when evaluating the effectiveness of a particular education policy or teaching practice. Acknowledging students' voices creates a positive impression among parents, encouraging them to play a more active role in their children's CBA activities.

Understanding how students learn may provide teachers with insights to improve their CBA practices, leading to more student-centred reform. In this way, teachers can identify the challenges students face in their CBA activities and provide support to help them progress. Indeed, findings from exploring students' experiences inform teachers' understanding of student diversity. Each student learns and progresses differently, allowing teachers to address educational gaps among students from diverse social backgrounds, abilities, and cultures. As such, students' needs are addressed. Furthermore, capturing students' lived experiences in the CBA learning cycles may provide policymakers with essential insights, especially in evaluating the practicality of textbook content and CBA activities. Hence, this leads policymakers to make informed decisions to enhance the relevance of CBA practices.

In conclusion, the variation in teachers' learning cycles was apparent because each participant's experience was unique, reflecting their varied prior experiences. Essentially, extensive teaching experience does not necessarily make one an expert, as knowledge is constructed through meaningful events that contribute to learning and change. At the same time, one should also possess the maturity to discern which meaningful experience applies to the current situation, enabling the effective implementation of CBA.

AUTHOR DECLARATION

All the authors contributed equally and agreed to the final version of the manuscript.

DECLARATION OF STATEMENT

The primary author declares that this manuscript is original and an open depiction of the study's findings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors sincerely thank all the participants for sharing their experiences and deeply appreciate everyone who contributed to this study, whether directly or indirectly.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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