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by User student 2 month

Submission date: 03-Apr-2023 04:36PM (UTC+1000)
Submission ID: 2034543709
File name: 7672-64598-3-ED_1.docx (64.29K)
Word count: 2823
Character count: 15671

The Level of Thinking Skills in the Reading Section of EFL Textbook in Indonesia

Abstract

The curricular implementations are represented in the textbook. The textbook is used by all students, who may have varying levels of thinking skill; however, it is a good opportunity to encourage students, regardless of their critical thinking skill level, to not only learn to know and understand, but also to apply, evaluate, and create such a product from their learning. The present study aims to investigates the level of thinking skills employed in the reading parts of EFL textbooks in Indonesia. The Ministry of Education and Culture officially printed the textbook for senior high school students in grade X. Content analysis was used to explore the level and frequency of thinking skills, focusing on the task and reading questions in the textbook. The data were quantitatively displayed in the form of a table. It was gained through the coding process based on the theoretical framework of Low Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) and High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) introduced by Bloom. It was found that the textbook mostly included knowledge and comprehension levels of thinking in the reading tasks and questions. It means that LOTS-based tasks and questions are more dominant than HOTS.

Keywords: LOTS, HOTS; Bloom taxonomy; reading tasks; reading questions

INTRODUCTION

High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) has become famous terminology introduced by the Indonesian government, where the concept was applied in the national exam. The idea attempts to educate students for the 4.0 industrial revolution, in which they are expected to have strong critical and analytical thinking abilities as education's major purpose. Evidently, the concept is based on the assumption that critical thinking skills help pupils deal with restrictions and successfully solve challenges. (Sutama et al., 2022). It also deals with the level of expected thinking skill where students not only need to be able to remember, but they should possess higher thinking skill (Limbach & Waugh, 2010) that covers the concept of knowledge, analyze, evaluate and create to be able to solve very complicated problems through rational thinking skill (Madhuri et al., 2012; Mahoney & Harris-Reeves, 2019).

Yet, it is argued that the incorporation of HOTS ideas should be mandated not just in high-stakes tests such as national exams but also in textbooks utilized in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, reading is the most likely component of a textbook to improve students' order thinking abilities because they are highly associated (Facione, 1990). Students' reading comprehension will increase with reflective thinking about their reading (Paul, 2005). Text base model reading activity that aims to understand simple text literally might not call critical thinking skills. Still, situation model reading, where readers should analyze, synthesize and contextualize the content with readers existing knowledge and situations, may require a high level of thinking skill (Afflerbach et al., 2015).

Extensive research on textbook analysis and evaluation has been conducted with a different focus. Some focus on cultural incorporation (Ariawan, 2020; Elmiana, 2019; Setyono & Widodo, 2019), gender representation (Koster & Litosseliti, 2021; Lee, 2018; Sovič & Hus, 2015; Widodo & Elyas, 2020; Yasin et al., 2012), ideology, religion, and identity (Behnam & Mozaheb, 2013; Tran-Thanh, 2020; Vu & Febrianti, 2018; Xiong & Yuan, 2018), type of standard English whether British or American (Lindqvist & Soler, 2022) and the incorporation of moral values (Canh, 2018; Feng, 2019; Puspitasari et al., 2021). Some addressed the idea of promoting critical thinking in the listening skill (Irianti et al., 2022), speaking (Viana et al., 2022), and writing skills (Arifin et al., 2020). However, the present study focused on investigating HOTS and LOTS incorporated in the reading section of an EFL textbook.

Moreover, a related study to the present research investigated three EFL textbooks used in university introductory courses and senior high schools (Freahat & Smadi, 2014). They concentrated on studying cognitive levels to identify thinking levels in open-ended questions in reading sections. Content analysis was utilized to analyze and monitor the occurrences of the categories by building tools like a checklist based on Bloom's taxonomy. The study concluded that lower-level thinking processes had been dominantly prescribed in the EFL textbook used at university, while EFL textbooks used at senior high school revealed higher-level thinking skills more dominantly. However, the difference compared to the previous study was in the object of analysis. It involved reading materials, tasks, exercises,s and context by looking at the topic before and after the main reading.

Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the level of thinking skill prescribed in the EFL textbook used by the English teacher at senior high school. Two research questions need to be explored; what are the levels of thinking skills applied in the reading tasks and the reading questions of the EFL textbook? And how are Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and Low Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) prescribed in the reading part of the EFL textbook? The present study aims to know the level of thinking skills prescribed in the reading section of the EFL textbook published by the Indonesian government. The study's findings will strongly recommend developing High Order Thinking Skills based on compulsory textbooks in the future.

METHOD

The present study investigates an English textbook *Buku siswa Bahasa Inggris SMA Kelas 10 (English Student's Book for 10th grade),* published by the Ministry of Education and Culture, especially in the reading section, which includes questions, tasks, or exercises as reading passages. The latest revised version of the textbook in the year 2017 prescribed for EFL learning in high school was used as the primary resource. The textbook discusses 15 chapters that include 17 reading passages. To select the data source, researchers select 56 reading tasks and 142 questions taken from 17 reading passages in the textbook. The data

were derived from the reading tasks and questions in the textbook. It started by examining the reading tasks and questions from all the reading parts. The coding process was repeated twice to three times to get a consistent result.

Bloom's taxonomy was employed as a theoretical framework to determine whether the level of thinking skills belongs to Low Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) and High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). The category of both thinking skills was based on the cognitive level of the taxonomy, namely knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. As the present study established some categories, it belongs to the content analysis (Ariawan, 2020). Data in the content analysis were expected to be useful evidence as the answer to hypotheses or research questions.

The content analysis employed three common steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion and verification (Huberman & Miles, 2012). The present study used a priori coding, where the researcher created a checklist that was strongly based on the theories presented in theoretical frameworks. The checklist was further revisited and revised accordingly, involving experts to validate the checklist prior to the research. Moreover, the result of coding was presented in tables to show the result of quantitative analysis, and a communicative elaboration will be provided to explain the findings. The table below contains further information on the domain, example, and keyword of the taxonomies (Bloom & Krathwohl, 1956). This used as an analytical tool to study the reading section of the textbook and determine which degree of thinking skill a certain question or passage belongs to.

Table 1. Cognitive taxonomies

Domain	Example and keywords (verb)
Knowledge: Recall data or information.	**Examples:** List the names of the main characters in the story. **Keywords:** States, selects, recognizes, recalls, knows, identifies, matches, describes, names, lists, defines, labels, outlines, recalls, recognizes, reproduces.
Comprehension: Understand the meaning, translation, and interpretation of instructions and problems. State a problem in one's own words.	**Examples:** What was the main idea of the story? **Keywords:** comprehends, converts, distinguishes, estimates, explains, gives an example, interprets, paraphrases, rewrites.
Application: use a concept in a new situation or unprompted use of an abstraction. Applies what was	**Examples:** Using what you know about the structure of the stories read in class, write a new story of your own.

learned in the classroom into novel situations in the workplace.	**Keywords:** applies, changes, computes, demonstrates, discovers, manipulates, operates, predicts, prepares, relates, shows, solves, uses.
Analysis: Separates material or concepts into component parts so that its organizational structure may be understood. Distinguishes between facts and inferences.	**Examples:** Break the story down into its separate parts, describing how they deal with. **Keywords**: analyzes, breaks down, compares, contrasts, diagrams, deconstructs, differentiates, discriminates, distinguishes, identifies, illustrates, infers, outlines, relates, selects, separates.
Synthesis: Builds a structure or pattern from diverse elements. Put parts together to form a whole, with emphasis on creating a new meaning or structure.	**Examples:** By combining these two stories about whales, what would you predict about the future of the whale population on earth? **Keywords**: categorizes, combines, compiles, composes, creates, devises, designs, explains, generates, modifies, organizes, plans, rearranges, reconstructs, relates, reorganizes, revises, rewrites, summarizes, tells, writes.
Evaluation: Make judgments about the value of ideas or materials.	**Examples:** Is this a well-written story, in your opinion? Why? Keywords: appraises, compares, concludes, contrasts, criticizes, critiques, defends, describes, discriminates, evaluates, justifies, relates,

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The Level of Thinking Skill in the Tasks of Reading Section

The data consists of 56 tasks taken from 17 passages in 15 chapters of the textbook. The result of task analysis indicates that Low Order Thinking Skill seems more dominant rather than High Order Thinking Skills. Knowledge is the most frequent task prescribed in the reading section. It is clearly seen in the table below that knowledge reaches 73.21%, comprehension 5.36%, and application 3.57%. Those High Order Thinking Skill domains are not significantly included in the tasks, with only 10.71%, 5.36%, and 1.78% among analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, respectively.

Table 3. Analysis of tasks in the reading section

Level of Thinking Skill	Domain	Frequency	Percentage
Low	Knowledge	41	73.21%

	Comprehension	3	5.36%
	Application	2	3.57%
High	Analysis	6	10.71%
	Synthesis	3	5.36%
	Evaluation	1	1.78%
Total		56	100%

The result indicates that tasks in the reading section of the EFL textbook dominantly employee Low Order Thinking Skill in the entire chapters. Most of the instruction aims to ensure students' knowledge or understanding of general information in the passage. It might happen because some topics in the reading passages deal with places and persons. Two topics describe a tourism destination that contains a lot of information about them. The instruction in the task mostly recalls the student's memory of the information. The same case is found in chapter 10 and 11 where the authors of the textbook describe Habibie and Cut Nyak Dien as Indonesian heroes. The text dominantly prescribes the details from those heroes. The task consistently set the purposes to test the students' memory. Several vocabularies that indicate knowledge are found such as "define", "name", "list", "pay attention" etc. The sentence of instruction or tasks mostly does not contain Higher Order Thinking Skill statement that aims to let students find by themselves the instruction.

Second most frequently prescribed domain is analysis, 10.71%, and followed by comprehension and synthesis with 5.36%. However, tasks that aim to test students' highest order thinking skill is less prescribed in the textbook. These findings are in accordance with previous research (Freahat & Smadi, 2014; Ö. Ulum, 2016) that depicted the lack of HOTS skill in the EFL textbooks. Whereas, critical thinking is part of soft skill that should be achieved by the students because the ability of being critical thinker is needed to explore complex range of problems (Gyenes, 2021). Furthermore, critical thinking is a skill that lead students to be independent learners (Yulian, 2021).

The Level of Thinking Skill in the Questions of Reading Section

It is also considered similar to the result of questions analysis where Low Order Thinking Skill is still mostly used in the questions of every single part of the reading. Knowledge and comprehension are the two domains that tend to be used in the questions.

Table 4: Analysis of questions in the reading section

Level of	Domain	Frequency	Percentage

Thinking Skill			
Low	Knowledge	95	66.90%
	Comprehension	35	24.70%
	Application	6	4.20%
High	Analysis	6	4.20%
	Synthesis	0	0
	Evaluation	0	0
Total		142	100%

Similar to the frequency and percentage in the tasks analysis, Low Order Thinking Skill is more frequently included in 142 questions. Most of the reading section provides comprehension questions to recall students' knowledge or memory dealing with the reading text. In chapter 1, for example, the questions solely ask yes or no questions and short answer questions such as "does she have…" and "where does Hanah study?", "What are Hanah's hobbies?" etc. In some chapters, there will always be two comprehensions questions which mostly ask detail information. It is clearly seen that the knowledge domain is very dominant in all chapters with more than 60%. Another most significant domain found in the questions is comprehension with 24.70%. Most of the questions related to comprehension aim to trigger students giving their explanation, examples and interpretation about particular information in the passage. In addition to Low Order Thinking Skill-based questions, the application is not significantly prescribed as it just reaches 4.20%. One of the examples dealing with the application is the question about how the reader applies the value in the reading to their social life, in chapter 2. Another example is the question about the relationship between one object with another object.

On the other hand, analysis domain just reaches 4.20%, the same as application that indicates the lack of HOTS inclusion in the questions. The finding indicates that tasks and questions in the reading section mostly prescribe Low Order Thinking Skill in the entire reading sections. This finding confirms the previous research that questions in the reading section of EFL textbook in Indonesia tends to require Low Order Thinking Skill (O. G. Ulum, 2016; Widiati, 2012). It seems very contradictive with the goals of Indonesian education stated in the curriculum toward students with sufficient critical thinking. To achieve it, a high level of thinking skill proposed by Bloom should be considered and applied in every single passage, task and question. It will benefit students as a brain exercise and regular process of growing their thinking skill. Out of 5 steps in accordance to critical thinking (Paul & Elder, 2012; Fisher, 2001): pre-reading activity, comprehension of the texts and generating a central idea of a paragraph, analyzing the logic of the text, evaluating the logic

as well as writing it (Xu, 2011), it seems that the analyzed textbook merely employees two steps only: pre-reading activity and comprehension. It does not really describe the process of interpretation, evaluation and reaction of students. Lack of HOTS in the EFL textbook might decrease the function and benefit of the textbook as guidance toward a learning target. While, in a global context, critical thinking is one of the most required skill in the 21st century beside communication, collaboration and creativity (Joynes et al., 2019). The present finding seems pivotal for teachers, textbook writers and researchers in the future where they have to collaboratively develop HOTS based textbooks (Aryani & Wahyuni, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The present study aims to find out the inclusion of HOTS and LOTS especially in reading section of an EFL textbook. It is found that, the textbook applies Low Order Thinking Skill more rather than High Order Thinking Skill. Knowledge and comprehension are the two most frequently inserted both in the tasks and questions. It might happen due to the topic presented in the textbook about places and persons that potentially review students' general knowledge. However, High Order Thinking Skill-based tasks and questions are just dominantly represented by the inclusion of analysis. It is actually a good point to triggers students' critical thinking as mentioned in the curriculum. It is becoming more problematic because the revision of the Indonesian curriculum due to the big dream to implement critical thinking approach in the teaching and learning process.

To achieve learning objectives comprehensively, it cannot really depend on teachers only. It should be supported with the aligned curriculum. One of the implementations of the curriculum is reflected through the textbook. It is true that the textbook is used by all students all over Indonesia that might have various level of thinking skill, however, it is good opportunity to trigger students, in whatever condition of their critical thinking skill, to not only learn to know and to understand, but also learn to apply, to evaluate and to create such a product from their learning. The researchers suggest that an EFL textbook should accommodate Higher Order Thinking Skill-based tasks and questions rather than Low Order Thinking Skill. The researchers also suggest further research dealing with LOTS and HOTS analysis in various EFL textbooks is conducted and it can be completed with analyzing teachers' and students' perception to gain a comprehensive result.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to express gratitude and thanks to SEAMEO QITEP in Language who funded this research through RESEARCH GRANTS in 2020.

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