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AN INSTRUCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE 10TH GRADE TEXTBOOK ENTITLED "ENGLISH FOR CRITICAL THINKING" USING BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

Fatwadika Adinia Dakoranis (1)
Universitas Negeri Semarang
fatwadikaadinia@students.unnes.ac.id

Sri Wahyuni (2)
Universitas Negeri Semarang
sriwahyunifbs@mail.unnes.ac.id

Abstract

Several previous studies that conducted textbook evaluations still found many shortcomings, imbalances, and inadequate content with their claims and misalignment with the curriculum objectives. In addition, many textbook evaluations of HOTS focused on reading comprehension and the main textbook. This study, therefore, aims to fill these gaps (1) classify all exercise instructions in the textbook entitled *"English for Critical Thinking"* Grade 10th into Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS: C1–C3) and HOTS (C4–C6) based on Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, and (2) identify which HOTS category was most prevalent. Employing a qualitative content-analysis approach and Revised Bloom's Taxonomy as the theoretical framework, the researcher systematically reviewed and coded 57 instructional items across the twelve chapters, assigning each to its respective Revised Bloom's Taxonomy cognitive level. Findings reveal that LOTS dominated 82.45% of all instruction exercises, while HOTS comprised only 17.54%. Within the HOTS domain, analyzing (C4) was overwhelmingly the most frequent with eight occurrences (80%), whereas evaluating (C5) and creating (C6) appeared only once each (10% each). This imbalance indicates that, although C4 tasks are fairly represented, higher cognitive processes of evaluation and creation remain severely under-implemented. Consequently, the textbook's purported support for critical and creative thinking does not fully align with Merdeka Curriculum objectives. Therefore, textbook developers and teachers should enrich future editions with more evaluative and creative tasks and ensure a balanced cognitive progression to develop students' HOTS optimally.

Keywords: Content Analysis**,** HOTS, Instructional Analysis, Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, Textbook

INTRODUCTION

English and critical skills are core elements for success among Indonesian students in the globalized world. The Merdeka Curriculum, as put forward by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, stresses the importance of not only communicative competence but also the accompanying development of critical and creative thinking (*Badan Standar Kurikulum Asesmen dan Pendidikan*, 2024). Merdeka curriculum or Emancipated Curriculum highlights teachers' flexibility and independence to design learning modules based on students' needs; moreover, Merdeka Curriculum stresses students' character development and 21st-century skills.

It requires an innovative learning environment that fosters higher-order cognitive processes under the labels of 4Cs: information, communication, collaboration, and creativity. There is a need for instructional materials to help meet these standards and bring the curriculum into the practice of the classroom. Textbooks are the main tool of classroom instruction, especially in areas where there is little to no access to digital technology (Sulistiyo et al., 2021). Textbooks are not only regarded as teaching materials that guide and organize teaching content and practice concomitantly with the spirit of the curriculum objectives; more importantly, they are also considered embodiments of the curriculum objectives (Graves, 2000; Tomlinson, 2014). Although the use of digital platforms is increasing, such as YouTube in language learning, at Indonesian schools, most students are still heavily dependent on printed textbooks as their main learning source. Therefore, the ability of textbooks to promote HOTS holds the preeminent concern in the precincts of ELT.

Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) offers a widely adopted cognitive framework for evaluating the depth of learning fostered by educational materials through the categorization of cognitive processes as Lower Order Thinking Skills (Remembering, Understanding, and Applying) and Higher Order Thinking Skills (Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating). The second issue that makes textbook design effective is how to balance the cognitive demands in the material to ensure students' critical engagement with the content. Much of the English textbook material in Indonesia is found to be well below the required percentage; however, as previous research reports, in the promotion of HOTS over LOTS in reading comprehension and isolated skill development. A number of studies in Indonesia have applied Revised Bloom's Taxonomy to evaluate cognitive demands in English textbooks, and the results consistently show the dominance of LOTS over HOTS. Sari & Sakhiyya (2020) found the dominance of LOTS in reading comprehension tasks, while Sukmawijaya et al. (2020) reported the presence of HOTS elements but with inadequate proportions to achieve curriculum goals. A similar pattern was also found by Putri et al. (2021) and Febriyani et al. (2020) in the practice section of high school textbooks, so the effectiveness of the material in developing students' reasoning and creativity can be questioned. Interestingly, most of the research so far has only highlighted the main textbooks published by the Ministry of Education. Studies of commercial books or companion books, which are actually also widely used in schools, are still rarely carried out.

This gap is what the present study addresses by scrutinizing the distribution of HOTS and LOTS in the instructional questions that appear in the text of English for Critical Thinking, Grade 10, published by Tiga Serangkai, and this being its companion textbook, which is or has been used in several schools in Indonesia to claim explicitly in its preface that it supports the students' critical thinking development. However, such claims will remain empirically underinvestigated until the present study. Previously, other studies had been evaluating the main textbooks by the government through frameworks like CLT or BSNP standards. Few studies have evaluated companion textbooks by applying any standard, even less so by applying it outside the domain of the reading comprehension of Revised Bloom's Taxonomy. This study used a qualitative content analysis to: 1) examine the instructional question types into HOTS and LOTS categories based on Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, and 2) identify the leading cognitive category in the domain of HOTS. The findings are expected to give empirical

evidence on the alignment of textbook content with critical thinking goals in the Merdeka Curriculum. This, in turn, can further academically debates on issues related to textbook quality, ELT materials development, and the integration of 21st-century skills in the Indonesian educational context.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed qualitative content analysis to look into the cognitive demand in the exercise instructions of an English textbook. Content analysis is a method through which textual researchers interpret and classify data within a defined framework—in this study, Revised Bloom's Taxonomy Anderson & Krathwohl (2001). This is helpful for finding trends in the instructional content and for classifying exercises as either lower-order or higher-order thinking skills.

The major data of this study was the English for Critical Thinking Grade 10 textbook by Tiga Serangkai. Though the analysis was made apart from direct classroom teaching, contextual insights were taken from some preliminary informal interviews with English teachers and students at SMAN 17 Tangerang Regency, one of the schools using the textbook. These insights confirmed the textbook's usage and its pedagogy's value in the actual classroom context.

The development of classification sheets by a researcher was based on six cognitive categories of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy to guide content analysis:

LOTS: Remembering (C1), Understanding (C2), and Applying (C3)
HOTS: Analyzing (C4), Evaluating (C5), and Creating (C6) Every exercise instruction was grouped by spotting the leading operational verb(s) and checking their fit with the cognitive categories to count and show the spread of cognitive levels across the twelve chapters of the book.

The data was gathered through document analysis. All 57 instructional questions in the book were taken out and put together. The following steps were taken in this study:

1) Validating the instruments by consulting the expert to review the coding criteria, data collection instruments, and analytical procedures judgment.
2) Reading all the exercise instructions in English for the Critical Thinking 10th grade textbook
3) Collecting the data provided by identifying all exercises in each chapter of the textbook.
4) Categorizing the instruction question types using Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (RBT) to classify each instructional question type into both HOTS and LOTS.
5) Identifying the instruction HOTS question types that appear dominantly in each chapter.
6) Assigning an initial code to each instructional question based on cognitive level verb usage.
7) Thematically analyzing the frequency and patterns in the data by calculating the percentage of HOTS and LOTS question types to determine the dominant category.
8) Interpreting the result of data analysis with the textbook's claimed objectives, whether it fosters students' HOTS or not, and elaborating on the HOTS dominant category.

To ensure accurate categorization, coding validation was done by intra-rater checking. Selected items were also shared with a senior lecturer of English language education for external judgment.

The study based its parameters on confirmability, dependability, and transparency to ensure that findings could be verifiable. The descriptions at each cognitive

level were taken straight from the framework of Anderson & Krathwohl and also validated against other relevant literature (Brookhart, 2010). In addition, expert judgment was used to triangulate the classification process to check subjective bias.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

3.1.1 Categorization of LOTS and HOTS of Instructional Question Types

In classifying the instructional questions in the English for Critical Thinking textbook, the study used the cognitive process dimension of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (RBT) defined by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001). The six levels of thinking defined by the RBT model are: C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, and C6, which stand for Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating. These are common categories in most educational assessment frameworks and are used in this analysis.

Each question in the exercise sections of the textbooks was carefully examined to determine the explicit action verb used and the level of cognitive demand it placed on students. Guided by an identification sheet, common instructional verbs were aligned with the relative levels of RBT. For example, "fill," "complete," and "match" typically fell under C3 (Applying), whereas "analyze," "compare," and "identify" would be C4 (Analyzing). The instruments used to classify underwent expert validation to align verbs and criteria with the Revised Bloom's taxonomy to ensure no subjectivity crept in and the codes could be applied reliably. After they were classified, each question was entered into a data matrix. Frequency analysis calculated the proportion of each cognitive level across all chapters.

The classification results showed a marked concentration of instructional questions at the C3 level, making up 34 out of 57 total questions (59.65%). These tasks usually call for students to apply grammar rules, fill in structured sentence frames, or use word forms given to them contextually. For example, instructions like "Complete the dialogue using will or be going to" and "Write the correct verb form in the blank space" show rote knowledge, focusing on applying rules rather than thorough conceptual understanding. Instructional questions at the C2 (Understanding) level totaled 10 items, making up 17.54%. These comprised reading passages and answering questions on interpreting literal meaning, identifying text structures, and recognizing relations between grammar forms. Instructional questions at the C1 (Remembering) level amounted to 3 (5.26%) throughout chapters where students had to recall information or definitions—for example, "Mention the place where you can hear the announcement."

On the other hand, Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) levels, that is, C4 (Analyzing), C5 (Evaluating), and C6 (Creating), were found in 10 questions only, constituting 17.54%. The most frequent among these was C4, with eight occurrences, 14.04%, which entails describing tasks wherein students were required to critically examine, categorize, or distinguish text components. An average C4 instruction, typical in Chapter 4, appears as an instruction such as "Compare the text in terms of the following aspects," which requires students to analyze how the text differs across sources. Besides, C4 analysis level found that C5 evaluation was found to be C5 evaluating, but it was found to be very limited in total.

Only one question fell under the C5 (Evaluating) category (1.75%), in which students were expected to engage in reflective judgment or provide justification for their conclusions, as seen in instructions involving group sharing and critical questioning. Similarly, only one question corresponded to

the C6 (Creating) level (1.75%), where students were prompted to produce an original product, such as making their spoken announcement. Despite its importance in fostering innovation and synthesis, the creating category remains underrepresented in the textbook.

The table below shows the breakdown of findings, which illustrates the bar diagram of each RBT category distributed across all exercises. From the analysis, the cognitive demand the instructional materials impinge on is majorly skewed towards LOTS, particularly C3. The overemphasis on lower cognitive skills implies that while the textbook purportedly strives to promote critical thinking, the tasks lag far behind that pedagogical aim

Table 2. Most Dominant of the HOTS Category

Table 2. Dominant of the HOTS Category in the Part of the Exercises

No	Cognitive Level of RBT	Frequency	Percentage
1	C1	3	5.26%
2	C2	10	17.54%
3	C3	34	59.65%
4	C4	8	14.04%
5	C5	1	1.75%
6	C6	1	1.75%
Total		57	100%

The table above shows the total HOTS and LOTS instructional question types at different cognitive levels. They were found to be as follows: In the realm of LOTS, the category Applying (C3) appeared the most dominant, with 34 items (59.09%), followed by Understanding (C2) with 10 items (17.54%) and Remembering (C1) with 3 items (5.26%). This suggests that most instruction encourages students to apply concepts already learned, rather than to analyze or develop ideas further. In the realm of HOTS, Analyzing (C4) is the most common category with eight items (14.04% of the total or 80% of the total HOTS). While Evaluating (C5) and Creating (C6) only appear once each (1.75% of the overall total or 10% of the total HOTS). From the classification using RBT, it can be inferred that the English for Critical Thinking textbook majorly trains students for knowledge and tasks, with almost nominal engagement in real tasks that elicit critical analysis, evaluative judgment, or include the learners creatively.

The disproportionate distribution of cognitive levels at the taxonomy tables between tables underlines the urgent need for textbook developers and teachers to re-evaluate the alignment between the pedagogical goals and the design of learning tasks, particularly in light of the Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on higher-order competencies.

3.1.2. Identification of the Most Dominant of HOTS Exercise Instruction Question Types

Despite the prevalence of lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) in the English for Critical Thinking textbook, the study found ten instructional questions related to higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). These fall under the domains of C4 (Analyzing), C5 (Evaluating), and C6 (Creating) as proposed by Revised Bloom's Taxonomy. Of these, the dominant HOTS category that emerged was C4 (Analyzing), comprising eight out of ten HOTS instances or 80% of the total number of HOTS instructional tasks that could be identified. The distribution of HOTS across chapters is depicted in the table below:

Table 2. Most Dominant of the HOTS Category

Table 2. Dominant of the HOTS Category in the Part of the Exercises

No	Cognitive Level of HOTS Category in the part of Exercises	Chapter	Frequency	Percentage
1	C4 Analyzing	3,4,6,10,12	8	80 %

No	Cognitive Level of HOTS Category in the part of Exercises	Chapter	Frequency	Percentage
2	C5 Evaluating	4	1	10 %
3	C6 Creating	7	1	10 %
Total		10	10	100%

From the table above, these C4 tasks usually instruct the students to break down and look at the information, such as finding text structures, comparing the content, and breaking down grammatical forms. From the data above, in Chapter 3 (p. 44), Students were told to find and analyze noun phrases, needing not just retrieval (C1) but also decomposition of linguistic structures (C4). Chapter 4 (p. 62) A multi-step task where students had to compare texts, share their findings, and invite peer feedback. These verbs imply deeper analytical and evaluative engagement, though only "compare" was directly classified under C4. Chapter 6 (p. 118) The instruction to identify the language features in a hortatory exposition text involved distinguishing and categorizing language elements an analytical task. Chapter 10 (p. 203) Since the verb used was show, prior analysis of noun phrase structures should have been done to diagram their components, implicitly placing it under C4. Chapter 12 (p. 237): The instruction to combine two sentences using adjective clauses did not just consider the verb show; it involved analysis of the components and implicit content relating to how students performed the task.

The dominance of C4 above C5 and C6 may result from its rather easy infusion into common practice and lessons relating to comprehension and grammar. Analysis is often considered a bridge between the mechanical application and the more complex types of thinking. However, this narrow consideration of C4 shows an incomplete implementation of HOTS. Indeed, analysis is a critical cognitive process. However, critical evaluation and creative synthesis, vital components of high-order learning and 21st-century competencies, are scantily represented, with only one instance for C5 and C6, each. The imbalance of HOTS levels indicates that the textbook slightly offers an opportunity for students to make decisions, be critical, or generate ideas.

The work of Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) places meaningful learning in a series that moves from understanding to applying and on to analyzing, and so on, with evaluating and creating at the top. However, the pattern of no steady scaffolding to C5 and C6 levels does not make for easy progression in this series. Findings of preceding studies support current results. e.g., Erdiana & Panjaitan (2023), Iffa & Fahmi (2023), identifying C4 as the HOTS level most frequently exercised in Indonesian EFL textbooks. C5 and C6 are still a few. Such findings may further imply that textbook planners perceive analysis as the highest thinkable application of HOTS within normative course constraints, or analysis may have received no guidance on how to meaningfully implement tasks of C5 and C6.

Though the C4 tasks are said to involve higher-order thinking, the fact that they largely stand as the only higher-level tasks, isolated from both C5 and C6 tasks, speaks to the incompleteness and inconsistency of HOTS integration in the English for Critical Thinking textbook. In order to realize its title and curricular promise, there must be a more balanced, progressive influx of C5 and C6 tasks that will duly arm students not just to analyze information that already exists, not just to critically evaluate arguments, but to come up with original ideas—requirements for applying knowledge to solve problems in the real world and one's academic growth.

3.2 Discussions

3.2.1 Limited presence of HOTS and dominated by LOTS

This study classified LOTS and HOTS instructional question types, following the theoretical framework of Anderson & Krathwohl (2001), which divides the cognitive process domain into six categories. According to this model, C1–C3 represent LOTS, which focus on recalling, understanding, and applying knowledge. Meanwhile, C4–C6 are HOTS, which involve analyzing, evaluating, and creating knowledge in new forms. The analysis showed that C3 (Applying) was the most dominant cognitive level, accounting for nearly 60% of all questions. Most tasks required students to apply grammatical rules, fill in blanks, complete sentence structures, or write guided responses—activities that involved procedural application of known concepts, but not deeper reflection or interpretation. These instructions confirm that the textbook prioritizes grammatical competence and language practice over conceptual engagement or reasoning. While these tasks are essential for developing foundational skills, they do not support the cultivation of critical thinking, which is one of the textbook's stated goals. Only 10 instructional question types were classified as HOTS, with C4 (Analyzing) being the most frequent.

For example, “Identify the language features of the hortatory exposition text.” (C4 – Chapter 6), “Compare the texts based on different aspects.” (C4 – Chapter 4), and “Show the parts of the noun phrase using a diagram.” (C4 – Chapter 10) Those instructions required students to break down information and examine structures, but remained within controlled and structured contexts. Only one question was found for C5 (Evaluating), which required students to assess or judge based on criteria, and one for C6 (Creating), where students were asked to create an original spoken announcement (Chapter 7). The scarcity of C5 and C6 reflects what Anderson & Krathwohl (2001) warn against: the failure to move learners toward the upper end of the cognitive hierarchy. C5 and C6 encourage decision-making, innovation, and synthesis of ideas—skills essential for 21st-century learning (Facione, 1990). Their near absence in the textbook suggests that students lack sufficient opportunities to develop evaluative reasoning or creativity in English learning tasks.

These findings mirror patterns found in several other textbook evaluations. For example, Sari and Sakhiyya (2020) found that English textbooks used in Indonesia overwhelmingly featured LOTS-type questions, especially at the C1 and C2 levels. Although the context and object of the study were different, Sari and Sakhiyya (2020) focused on the reading tasks in the book "Symphony 1" used under the 2013 Curriculum, while this study analyzed the exercise instructions in the companion book "English for Critical Thinking" in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, the two studies indicated a similar pattern, namely the imbalance of the distribution of LOTS and HOTS. The similarity of these findings strengthens the argument that the low integration of HOTS is a consistent issue in English textbooks in Indonesia, thus emphasizing the need for improvement efforts both at the material development and book evaluation stages to be in line with the curriculum goals to develop students' critical and creative thinking skills.

The results of this study are also relevant to the findings of Iffa & Fahmi (2023), who evaluated the book "When English Rings a Bell" for grade VIII and found that although the HOTS element was present, most of it was still concentrated at the C3 (*Applying*) level. This situation suggests that despite attempts to include high-level thinking skills in textbooks, their implementation tends to be limited to

intermediate cognitive levels and has not been extended to higher levels of HOTS, such as C5 (*Evaluating*) and C6 (*Creating*). The findings of this study reinforce this pattern, where HOTS is indeed identified in the book "English for Critical Thinking", but the proportion is only 17.54% and is dominant at the C4 level (*Analyzing*), while C5 and C6 are very rare. The similarity of this pattern indicates that the development of HOTS materials in English textbooks in Indonesia is still not optimal, so a more diverse question design strategy and activities are needed to really encourage critical and creative thinking skills according to the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The results of this study are also in line with the findings of Zainil et al. (2020), who revealed that high school textbooks in Padang mostly focus on the C2 (Understanding) level, with very few tasks that touch higher cognitive levels, such as C4–C6. This pattern was seen again in this study, where 82.45% of the training instructions were categorized as LOTS and only 17.54% were categorized as HOTS—ironically, even though the book's title itself emphasizes the orientation to *critical thinking*. This similarity reinforces the suspicion that the low proportion of HOTS is not a stand-alone case, but rather a trend that is still entrenched in various English textbooks, so a material design overhaul is needed to truly encourage students' high-level thinking skills.

Further studies reinforce this pattern. Febriyani et al. (2020) and Alifa et al. (2024) reported that most reading comprehension questions in junior and senior high school English textbooks focus on C1 and C2 levels. The study has findings are in line with a pattern that has been repeated in many previous studies. It shows that most *reading comprehension questions* in English textbooks, both for junior high and high school, are still focused on the C1 (*Remembering*) and C2 (*Understanding*) levels. This means that although higher-level thinking skills are beginning to be introduced, the main focus is still on remembering and understanding information, not analyzing, evaluating, or creating. This picture is very much in line with the results of this study, where LOTS dominates 82.45% of the practice content in *the English for Critical Thinking* textbook, and HOTS only appears 17.54%, even the C5 and C6 levels are almost untouched. This similarity gives a pretty clear message: the problem is not only about the type of text or skills being tested, but rather the approach to the preparation of the material as a whole that still does not provide enough space for students to develop critical and creative thinking skills as expected in the Merdeka Curriculum.

Fitriani & Kirana (2021) noted that 77% of textbook questions emphasized LOTS, leaving only 23% for HOTS. Even in textbooks aimed at eleventh graders, where cognitive demand should theoretically increase, Putri et al. (2021) found only a modest representation of HOTS-oriented questions. Interestingly, a few studies contrast this pattern. Saputri (2021), for example, reported a higher frequency of HOTS questions than LOTS in the textbook she examined, showing that a HOTS-oriented textbook is achievable with deliberate instructional design. However, her findings remain an exception rather than the norm in Indonesian EFL textbook design.

The consistency of these results across different studies suggests a systemic trend in Indonesian textbook development, while policy and curriculum frameworks (such as the Merdeka Curriculum and the Pancasila Student Profile) promote critical and creative thinking, textbook implementation lags. The textbooks focus on comprehension and grammatical accuracy, rather than on developing reasoning and originality. This classification analysis demonstrates that the textbook does not fully reflect the constructive

alignment recommended by Biggs (1996), which stresses that teaching activities and assessments should be aligned with learning outcomes. Suppose national standards emphasize HOTS as essential for student success. In that case, instructional tasks in textbooks must provide balanced cognitive progression—moving students from LOTS to HOTS in a structured and intentional manner. Moreover, the lack of consistent HOTS integration may impede students' preparedness to face real-world challenges that require higher-order thinking, such as analyzing arguments, solving problems, and producing original work. As noted by Anderson & Krathwohl (2001). Learners must be supported to gradually move from surface to deep learning processes. However, in this textbook, the jump from C3 to C4 is abrupt, and the opportunities to experience evaluating or creating are nearly non-existent.

3.2.2 Analysis of the Most Frequent Category

The study found that in the three levels of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) described in the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, which is C4 (Analyzing), C5 (Evaluating), and C6 (Creating), C4 appears to be most dominant, having accounted for 80% of the overall HOTS questions that could be elicited from the English for Critical Thinking textbook. The trend, which is in tandem with the taxonomy's structure, has significant pedagogical and curriculum implementation, especially in developing higher-order thinking in English language learning. One likely reason why C4 tends to dominate is that it is considered a cognitive threshold, signifying the transition of the thinking process from essentially remembering and understanding (LOTS: C1–C3) to the higher forms of mental activity. Described by Anderson & Krathwohl (2001), Skills at the Analyzing level involve breaking information into parts, checking for relationships between ideas, and considering structures and patterns. Typically, in the exercise of teaching a language, tasks to be performed would involve recognizing noun phrases, comparing sentence constructions, or checking coherence of a passage—tasks which are much more demanding intellectually than mere application of grammatical rules, and still most often clearly defined and specific.

Since the C4-level tasks offer measurable outcomes and clear evaluation criteria, they are considered more manageable task types for textbook writers to design and for teachers to assess learners. This makes C4 a safe task to integrate HOTS with minimal instructional and grading complexity (Efendi et al., 2023). For example, such tasks as "Combine two sentences using an adjective clause" (Chapter 12, p. 237) or "Show the parts of the noun phrase using a diagram" (Chapter 10, p. 203) continue with the involved student in structural analysis. They remain highly guided with little room for more varied responses. Tasks at the C5 (Evaluating) and C6 (Creating) levels were only one in the textbook. These higher levels need open-ended thinking that includes making judgments, justifications, or producing original outputs—skills requiring cognitive complexity, instructional scaffolding, and flexible assessment strategies (Facione, 1990). Their near absence reflects both conceptual hesitancy and practical constraints in textbook design, especially in settings with a classroom practice of standardized assessment. The problem is more serious because HOTS-oriented tasks are given with unclear or nonspecific action verbs. For instance, in one task, students were required to "show the parts of the noun phrase by using a diagram". The task would involve analysis, which does not make the task instructionally aligned to "show" because "show" is not as specific as "analyze," "differentiate," or "organize." Such instructional misalignment clarifies to a student what is expected of him

and therefore, makes an activity less effective, as it would otherwise have been (Sweller, 1988) Unclear instructions raise extraneous cognitive load since they are not closely tied to the critical skill to be acquired. According to Willis (1996), clear and explicit instructions are crucial for understanding the task and the proper cognitive strategies. This trend is not only in this study. In previous studies, it has also been shown that C4 is the highest level of integration of thinking skills in most Indonesian English textbooks.

The findings of this study are also in line with the results of studies by Arisman et al. (2024), Erdiana & Panjaitan (2023), and Iffa & Fahmi (2023), who noted that analytical tasks (C4) dominated, while the evaluation (C5) and creation (C6) aspects were almost untouched. This pattern shows a systematic tendency to interpret HOTS only as being limited to analytical ability, without developing the entire cognitive spectrum in RBT. Indeed, C4 belongs to the HOTS category, but if it stands on its own without adequate support from C5 and C6, the achievement of high-level thinking skills becomes half-baked. In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, this imbalance is not only a technical problem, but also a sign of a mismatch with the big goal of developing the Pancasila Student Profile, which places critical thinking and creativity as two key elements for Indonesian students. As a result, if one aspect of C4 is overemphasized rather than evaluative and generative thinking, this will then limit students from getting involved in reflective judgment and independent production of ideas. As argued by Biggs (1996) through his constructive alignment theory, instructional materials must align with intended learning outcomes. Here, for instance, a curriculum innovation is promised with verve for critical engagement; however, if the textbooks set such bounds to the task as mere structural analysis, the intended outcomes will not, in practice, be realized. This means that students exposed to C4 tasks may have developed only partial abilities to think critically. They may have learned how to identify patterns or break down the components of grammar, but without exposure to tasks at the C5 level, there is little opportunity to make assumptions in their analyses, to critique arguments, or to begin to support an argument. Equally important, without exposure to tasks at the C6 level, they are rarely called upon to generate original content, to suggest solutions, or to share creative thoughts— all of which are key to growth in an academic setting and applications to the real world (Facione, 1990; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

This means that while HOTS integration is taking place, the lack of balanced cognitive scaffolding acts as a force that nullifies the possible impacts. The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy promotes a progressive model of cognitive development. Here, learners move from recalling knowledge to the systematic and supported making of knowledge. However, if those few and isolated tasks in the textbook do not allow such a flow, the whole concept is disturbed, leading to restrictions in the students' cognitive growth. In the future, textbook developers have to consider not just adding more HOTS tasks but also ensuring their quality, in terms of the depth of the cognitive skills involved and the clarity of instruction. This involves using verbs for task setting (e.g., evaluate, justify, synthesize, propose) that are as sharp as possible, placing tasks within authentic, contextualized problems, promoting collaborative reasoning, and giving students more say in task completion.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the levels of cognitive demand in instructional questions used and identified the predominant HOTS category in the English for Critical Thinking

Grade 10 text by categorizing them, as per the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy.

The findings revealed a basic discrepancy in the declared aim of the textbook to foster critical thinking and the actual cognitive operations it promotes. While there is a presence of C4 (Analyzing) tasks to some superficial level of effort to embed HOTS, over-concentration on C3 (Applying) tasks and the dearth of C5 (Evaluating) and C6 (Creating) tasks betrays a deeper structural limitation in the design of the textbook. This asymmetry is not mere numerical imbalance but curricular misalignment that blocks off learners from ascending to the full spectrum of higher-order thinking as envisioned by the Merdeka Curriculum and the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila.* The dominance of C4 reveals that analysis is viewed as the ceiling of cognitive engagement in many textbook tasks, likely due to its perceived instructional manageability and assessability. However, without a complement. However, without complementary Erdiana, N., & Panjaitan, S. (2023). How are tasks that demand evaluative judgment and creative synthesis, students are confined to fragmented critical thinking, where they can deconstruct information but not meaningfully judge it or transform it into original output. In this way, the cognitive growth intended by the curriculum is stunted not at the policy level, but at the level of instructional implementation. This indicates that the book does not really portray HOTS tasks and help the students think critically and creatively. The tasks do not form a strong base for thinking deeply about what the Merdeka Curriculum and other big goals of 21st-century education need. Although the C4 tasks prove good work on seeking involvement at higher levels, if there are no deep evaluation and creation tasks, then pedagogy design is a gap and has to be addressed.

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