

## **AN ASSESSMENT OF THINKING SKILLS IN 'ENGLISH SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE' FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADE XII**

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**Abstract:** In 2013, Indonesia developed a brand-new scientific-based English instruction curriculum that emphasized the growth of communicative competence. In addition, the curriculum aims to develop students' thinking skills so that they can function as independent, responsible, and critical learners who are able to communicate effectively in English. As a direct consequence of this, authors of textbooks either called for the creation of brand-new textbooks tailored to the new curriculum and its four domains or attempted to adapt existing textbooks to the new curriculum. As a result, numerous books have been written for 7th grade SMP/MTs and 12th grade SMA/SMK/Aliah. The study sought to determine whether textbooks encourage critical thinking and the proportion of various thinking skills. Due to the textbooks as the data source, the current study was classified as a content analysis. Based on the results, it can be seen that the majority of the items are strategically located in L1 (Remember), with two hundred sixty-one questions (67 percent), followed by ninety-two questions (23 percent) in L2 (Understand), twenty-four questions (6 percent) allocated in L3 (Apply), and the remaining nine questions (2 percent) in L4 (Analyze). Consequently, the textbook described the lower order thinking level's prioritization. Although there was not a uniform distribution of each thinking level, the textbook promoted critical thinking in the EFL learning process and encouraged students to investigate their lower thinking level.

**Keywords:** *Thinking Skill, Bloom Taxonomy, EFL, Assessment, EFL Students*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 2013, Indonesia developed a brand-new scientific-based English instruction curriculum that emphasized the growth of communicative competence. In addition, the curriculum aims to develop students' thinking skills so that they can function as independent, responsible, and critical learners who are able to communicate effectively in English. As a direct consequence of this, authors of textbooks either called for the

creation of brand-new textbooks tailored to the new curriculum and its four domains or attempted to adapt existing textbooks to the new curriculum. As a result, numerous books have been written for 7th grade SMP/MTs and 12th grade SMA/SMK/Aliah. According to Fredericks (2005), good textbooks serve as an essential guide for teaching and learning a particular subject. They serve as a resource for both students and teachers. They provide teachers with detailed lesson plans and material, as well as a chronological presentation of information about a topic. One of the most important aspects of developing students' language competence and thinking are the activities in textbooks. Without a textbook, it will be much more challenging to learn the material. It is one of the most important tools you have.

The textbook is merely a device. Despite their apparent superiority, textbooks do have some drawbacks. For instance, questions from textbooks typically focus on facts or are simplistic. It doesn't take into account what students already know. The textbook's reading level is too high. According to Fredericks (2005), some textbooks contain all of the answers to all of the questions. As a result, excessive reliance on textbooks and disregard for other classroom materials should be avoided. Teachers also have to make a lot of decisions, one of which is how to choose a good textbook that meets the curriculum's requirements. According to Törnroos (2005), English textbooks are expected to influence students' critical thinking as well as their learning progress. The importance of critical thinking in education and learning cannot be overstated. In most educational settings, stakeholders, however, do not pay enough attention to these skills.

The English textbooks used by junior and senior high school English teachers do not show critical thinking skills as expected. Lower-level thinking skills still dominate English textbooks, though not all of them (Solihati and Hikmat, 2018; Ilyas, 2015). Evaluation of textbooks is necessary due to the annual sale of millions of copies (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994, cited in Litz, 2005). This study is suggested for this reason. The question in the learning textbook's thinking level should be examined in light of the aforementioned ideas. In light of the preceding explanation, the researcher plans to carry out a study with the following title: "English Skills for the Future: An Assessment

of Thinking Skills for Junior High School Students in Grade XII".

In addition, Assaly and Smadi (2015) evaluated the questions' cognitive levels in relation to the Master Class textbook's reading texts. The instrument used to classify these questions according to their cognitive levels was a Bloom's Taxonomy-based checklist. The comprehension questions' cognitive levels were ranked by the researchers using appropriate statistics. The findings demonstrated that, while the author of Master Class wrote only 3.7% and 6% of the questions on the cognitive levels of Knowledge and Application, respectively, he or she emphasized the cognitive level of comprehension in 52% of the questions, which was significantly more than the frequency that was anticipated. On the cognitive levels of Evaluation and Analysis, the frequency of questions was much closer to the expected range. The findings indicated that, in accordance with the requirements of the revised curriculum, approximately forty percent of the textbook's questions emphasized higher-order thinking abilities. It is recommended to evaluate and select a good textbook that aligns with the curriculum's objectives. A study of this kind would shed light on how textbooks help Arab students learn how to think.

Alnofal (2018) also looked into the thinking levels of questions that EFL teachers asked first-year English Department students at Al-Imam Mohammad ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU). The study also looked into the thinking levels of comprehension questions in the reading and writing textbook "Unlock, Reading and Writing 1," which IMSIU first-year English Department students use. The study also looked at how different the instructors' questions and the books they taught differed in terms of the proportion of questions for higher and lower thinking levels.

The study's sample consisted of 15 classes taught by EFL teachers in reading and writing. In addition, the Revised Bloom's taxonomy was used to classify all of the questions in the textbook (Unlock, Reading, and Writing 1) (Anderson et al., 2001). The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential analysis methods. In addition, the use of Chi 2 cross tabulation was utilized in order to demonstrate the differences between the two textbooks' cognitive levels. The majority of the first-year teacher questions, according to the findings, are at lower cognitive levels (knowledge,

comprehension, and application). In addition, the textbook analysis revealed that the two textbooks under investigation tended to focus on lower-level cognitive skills. The purpose and research methodology of the proposed study are comparable to those of the previous two studies.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The following research questions were attempted to be answered: 1) Does "English Skills for the Future" for Senior High School Students in Grade XII include a variety of thinking skills? 2) Do the selected English textbooks encourage Bloom's taxonomy-based critical thinking? The textbooks serve as the data source for this study, which falls into the content analysis category when viewed in light of these questions. According to Krippendorff (2004), at p. 18, content analysis is "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use." The quantitative nature of the content analysis, typically of keywords or content, is used in conjunction with the interpretation of the underlying context because the data analysis deals with proportions of thinking skill levels (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1277).

As pointed out before, the study deals with "English Skills for the Future" for Senior High School Students Grade XII written by Herman benyamin and Endang Aminudin Aziz, which published by Grafindo Media Pratama. The data will be collected from these textbooks. It has been mentioned before that the data in this study are all wh-questions following each reading text in the textbook. The data are collected by the researcher herself and a lecturer at the English Education Department. The involvement of the lecturer aims at avoiding misidentification and misclassification of the data. Thus, it aims at maintaining validity and reliability of the data collected.

Descriptive analysis was applied to the primary data gathered from the textbooks under study in order to respond to the research questions. All questions were categorized according to Bloom's six categories of cognitive level in the descriptive analysis, and frequencies and percentages of thinking level were reported. The data were presented in the form of a table and a bar diagram. The data were then divided

into thinking skill categories for each chapter and the entire book, and percentages were calculated to see how much the textbook's questions emphasize both lower-level and higher-level questions. The formula that will be used is.

$$\text{Score \%} = \frac{\text{Total questions per type of thinking skill}}{\text{Total number of questions}}$$

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the research are presented into two main sections; result and discussion. The result presented the data which have collected previously. The discussion deals with the findings in the research based on the formula analysis. To begin with, the textbook of "English Skills for the Future" is primarily aimed to hone as well as sharpen the students' critical thinking in order to shape their understanding. It strategically builds the creative learning by encouraging problem-solving skill through the learning questions. All the materials are designed to develop the learning growth in the valuable context, which promoted how English is not merely as communication but also as the cultural instrument in the current global society.

Furthermore, in terms of structure, the textbook consists of six chapters, which are Be Caring, Be Proud, Be Analytical, Be Mature, Be Critical, and Be Joyful. Delivering five steps in scientific approach such as observing, questioning, exploring, associating and communicating. Overall, the chapters offers an activity that stimulates students' inquiry towards the subject discussed. Thus, they are guided in systematic observation, formulating relevant questions, correlating the subject with familiar phenomenon, experimenting and analyzing.

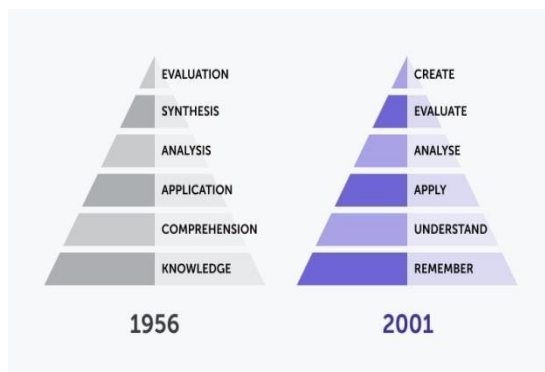
In addition to these activities, the textbook encompasses religious as well as social interaction to extend the students' comprehension. Interestingly, promoting the sense of relevant context in their daily life activities as EFL students. Combining the English learning with familiar events around them. As the textbook provides various features of learning discussion in the six respective chapters, there are three hundred eighty eight inquiries in total. Those questions are uniquely composed based on the feature of the

activities. As stated in the chapter three, the researcher was focused on the questions related to the thinking skill in order to answer the targeted research questions at the first place. In this case, the category of WH questions became the indicator to determine the number of relevant questions.

This type of question is basically explored the basic competence of the student, which focused on the basic knowledge.

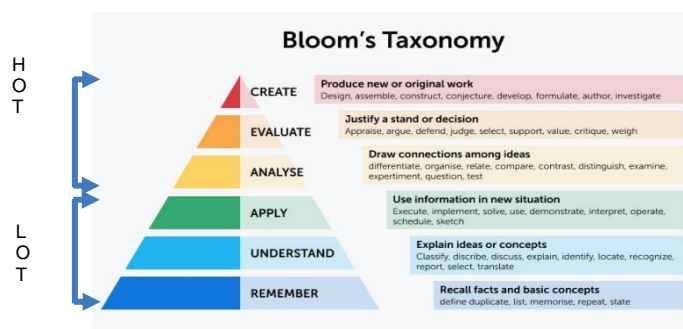
In regards to this knowledge exploration, it is in line with the first level of the bloom's taxonomy. Obviously, the textbook bridges their knowledge within English learning activities as communication tool. In other words, encourage the student to express the knowledge in English words. The categorization based on the latest revised bloom's taxonomy, as could be portrayal in the figure below stated by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001).

**Figure 1. The Revised Picture of Bloom Taxonomy**



Benjamin Bloom created Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Domain in the 1950s. It was designed to convey various modes of thought. One of the most widely used models, it can be utilized for planning purposes in the classroom. A method for categorizing thinking abilities into six levels, from the most fundamental to the most complex, is provided by Bloom's Taxonomy. As can be seen in the figure that follows, the taxonomy is further subdivided into two parts of skill: higher order thinking skill and lower order thinking skill.

**Figure 2. Thinking Skill Category**



The lower level of Bloom's Taxonomy is called lower level thinking skill (LOTS). It exemplifies the level of expertise required to progress to higher Bloom's Taxonomy levels. The foundations for higher-level thinking are the skills learned at this level. The three main skills that LOTS encourages are memory, comprehension, and application.

Higher order thinking skill (HOTS) takes place in a hierarchy of cognitive process. It is a continuum of thinking skills starting with knowledge level thinking, and moving to evaluation thinking. HOTS promote the rest skills encompass analyzing, evaluating and creating. Hence, the overall data of WH questions of the chapters is quantitatively presented in the first following table as the basic information of the questions in all activities.

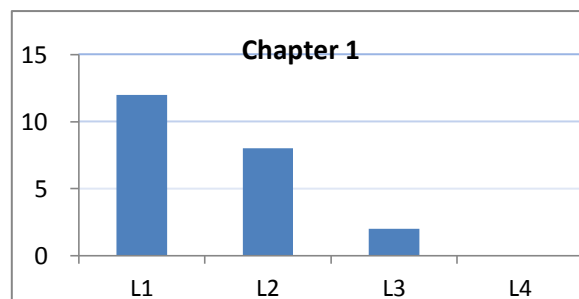
**Table 1. Overall Data Result**

Section	Level Thinking Questions				Total
	L1	L2	L3	L4	
Chapter I. Be Caring	12	8	2	-	22
Chapter II. Be Proud	20	12	11	4	47
Chapter III. Be Analytical	67	17	1	1	86
Chapter IV. Be Mature	17	13	3	3	36
Chapter V. Be Critical	45	18	2	-	65
Chapter VI. Be Joyful	101	24	6	1	132
<b>Total</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>388</b>

As shown in the table above, the number of inquiries are allocated in six respective chapters with the total three hundred eighty six questions, by twenty two (C1), forty seven (C2), eighty six (C3), thirty five (C4), sixty four (C5) and one hundred thirty two (C6). Interestingly, the majority of items are focused on lower order thinking skills, encompasses four category of thinking level in the textbook. Following the revised taxonomy, these coded domains are remember (L1), understand (L2), apply (L3) and analyze (L4).

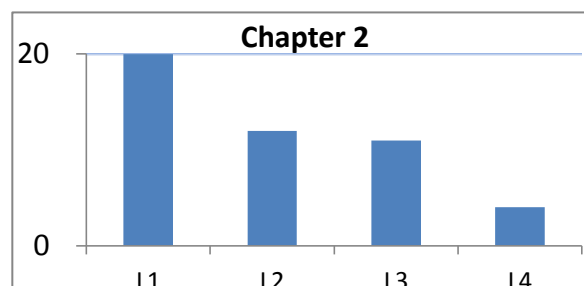
In regards to the question item, each group questions was constructed by focusing on the activity related to the chapter. Moreover, in terms of the quantity of categories, calculated number each are two hundred sixty one (L1), ninety two (L2), twenty four (L3) and nine (L4). To be more detail, the finding percentage in each chapter as well as overall chapters were presented in the following diagram bar.

**Figure 1. The percentage of thinking level question in chapter one**



Based on the figure one above, it could be seen that twelve (54, 6%) of the questions are categorized as L1 (Remember), eight (36, 3%) questions in L2 (Understand), two (9, 10%) L3 (Apply) and zero question in L4 (Analyze). It showed that most of the inquiries in the chapter one are basically classified as lower order thinking skill.

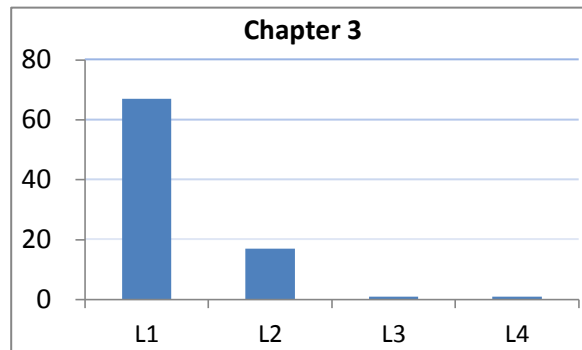
**Figure 2. The percentage of thinking level question in chapter two**





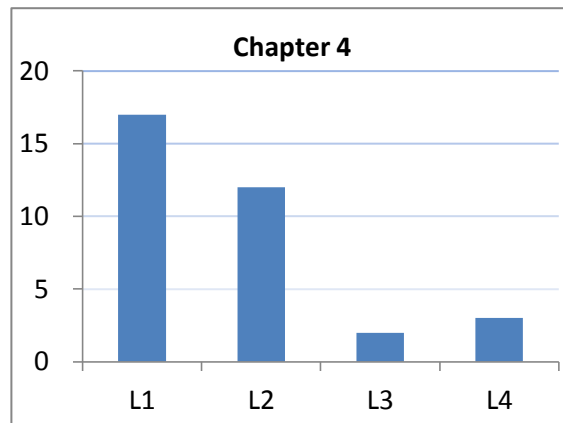
The diagram above showed the categorization as follow, twenty (42, 5%) questions L1 (Remember), twelve (25, 5%) questions L2 (Understand), eleven (23, 4%) questions with L3 (Apply) and four (8, 6%) in L4 (Analyze). This result conveyed that this chapter is mainly offered lower order thinking skill overall.

**Figure 3. The percentage of thinking level question in chapter three**



In the obtained result from the figure three above, it showed that majority of the questions is dominated by L1 (Remember) with sixty seven (78, 0%). Followed by L2 (Understand) in seventeen questions (20, 0%), and both one question (1, 0%) for L3 (Apply) as well as L4 (Analyze). It depicts that chapter three is mainly L1 (Remember).

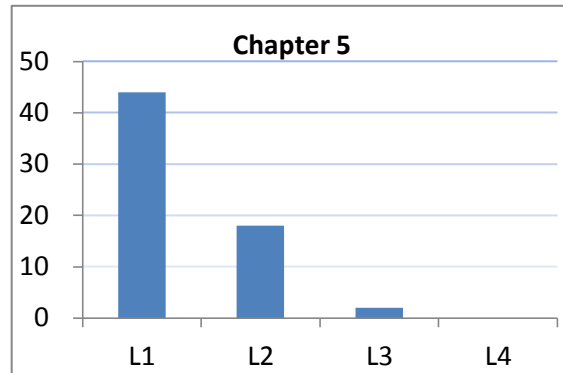
**Figure 4. The percentage of thinking level question in chapter four**



It could be pointed out in the figure above that seventeen (47, 2%) questions in L1 (Remember) as majority of the percentage. Meanwhile thirteen (36, 2%) in L2 (Understand), three (8, 3%) questions in L3 (Apply) and three (8, 3%) in L4 (Analyze).

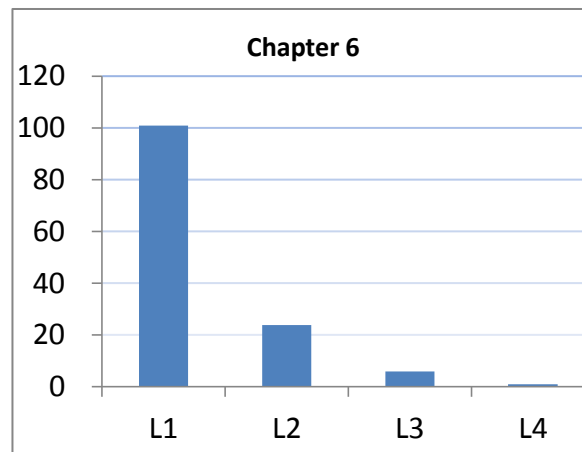
Based on these data, it shown that L1 (Remember) questions are the focused on the chapter four.

**Figure 5. The percentage of thinking level question in chapter five**



The result of figure five above shows that forty five (69, 2%) questions in L1 (Remember), eighteen (27, 0%) of them in L2 (Understand), two (3, 8%) questions in L3 (Apply) while zero question in L4 (Analyze). From the scale result, chapter five is basically rely on the exploration of L1 (Remember) thinking questions.

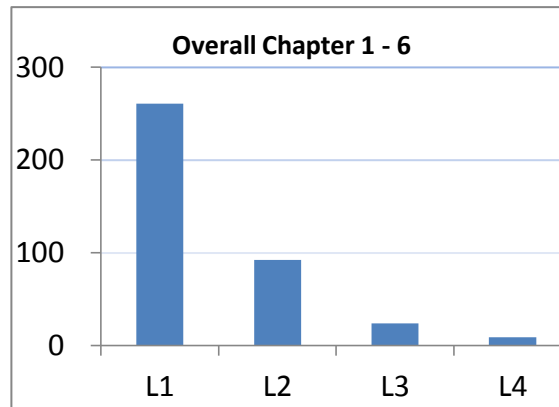
**Figure 6. The percentage of thinking level question in chapter six**



From the figure six above, it could be seen that one hundred one (76, 5%) of questions are L1 (Remember), twenty four (18, 2%) questions in L2 (Understand), six (4, 5%) in L3 (Apply), lastly one question (0, 8%) in L4 (Analyze). It pointed out that

most of the inquiries are dominated with L1 (Remember) thinking questions in the entire activity of the chapter six.

**Figure 7. The overall thinking level percentage of the chapters**



Based on the figure above, it could be seen that the majority of the items are strategically in L1 (Remember) with total two hundred sixty two (67, 5%), followed by ninety two questions (23, 8%) in L2 (Understand) category, twenty five questions (6, 4%) allocated in L3 (Apply) while the rest as the minority nine questions (2, 3%) in L4 (Analyze). Hence, it described the prioritization of lower order thinking level in the textbook.

In this section the researcher discussed the obtained finding in order to analyze the previous result. The textbook of this research was the '*English Skills for the Future for Senior High School Grade XII*' written by Herman Benyamin and Endang Aminudin Aziz, which published Grafindo Media Pratama in 2016. It has six chapters with various activities which mainly support as well as develop the students understanding. Based on the result, the researcher categorized the related questions by using the domain level in the taxonomy category. These inquiries are encouraged students' knowledge to be explored widely in the learning context of respective chapter. Thus, the textbook is primarily engaged to combine the learning and relevant context. First of all, the inquiries were classified in the value of thinking level context. In this case, categorization was utilized by looking at the most related content of the Bloom's taxonomy activity, namely remember (L1), understanding (L2), apply (L3), analyze (L4),

evaluate (L5) and create (L6). Interestingly, the overall items are only allocated in the four thinking level such as L1 (Remember), L2 (Understand), L3 (Apply) and L4 (Analyze) in the textbook. Regarding the types of questions, the activities were involving in fulfilling, mentioning, applying and writing activities based on the topic given.

As English textbooks are expected to affect not only students' communicative competence, but also their critical thinking, textbook was being examined to answer the research question at the first place. In this case, do comprehension questions of textbook 'English Skills for the Future for Junior High School Grade XII' promote critical thinking skills in terms of Bloom's taxonomy. Additionally, the purpose of this study was to examine the proportion of different thinking skills and whether the textbooks promote critical thinking. The analysis was conducted on the characteristic of the Bloom's taxonomy. In regards to this objective, the question items have been analyzed based on the purpose which focusing on examine the proportion in the form of percentage. Practically, to measure the thinking level distribution each chapter as well as to find out whether the textbook promote critical thinking. These are the focus indicators in order to assess textbook. They were used to determine the assessment of the questions, as directed parameter on research notion. Therefore, the initial percentage have been presented at the result section, demonstrating the distribution of each chapter in relation to the questions asked, and showing the number of questions in the four thinking level. The further explanation is presented in the next discussion of this chapter.

## **CONCLUSION**

The result of finding and the discussion explained in previous chapter led the researcher to conclude that the majority of textbook's inquiries are dominantly focused on lower thinking level such as L1 (Remember), L2 (Understand), L3 (Apply) and lastly L4 (Analyze). Although there were no equal distribution of each thinking level but the textbook was truly delivered as well as promoted critical thinking in EFL learning process, encouraging the students to explore their lower thinking level. In this case, the

textbook of this research which 'English Skills for the Future for Senior High School Grade XII' has successfully brought various thinking level in the activity. It explicitly revealed that Bloom's taxonomy has been taken into account as the tool for language learning in senior high school.

The overall discussion leads the researcher to suggest the other researcher to explore the present study by extending the various relevant textbook in the matter of EFL context. An extension would enrich the specific research area for better understanding. Furthermore, the facilitators are expected to be able to apply effective proportion of thinking level. Providing adequate activity takes critical role at the very first place, while learners must increase their knowledge in terms of English language learning.

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