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The Cognitive Thinking Levels Demanded in the Tasks in the Coursebook Global Level 1 (A2)

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Abstract:- Nowadays, it is the responsibility of teachers and educators to integrate 21st century skills including critical thinking into lessons to help students survive in the challenging world. The present study aimed to motivate teachers in Myanmar to incorporate thinking skills into their lessons while using a coursebook. The study investigated the levels of thinking skill that instructions for the activities called for in the coursebook *global Level 1(A2)*, the Myanmar version. The instructions given in the coursebook *global Level 1(A2)* were gathered, analysed and categorized in conformity with the cognitive process dimension in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001). The results of the study revealed that 68.29 % of 776 instructions called for lower level thinking whereas 31.71% of them demanded higher level thinking skills. The study highlighted that teachers in ELT context as well as teachers of all respective disciplines and educators in Myanmar to pose questions or give instructions, provoking critical thought. It will promote students' thinking and problem solving skills in any teaching context to nurture students to be able to cope with the challenges in the real world.

Keywords:- *Critical Thinking, Cognitive Process, Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001), Coursebook Global Level 1(A2).*

I. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is usually defined as "the knowledge age" and as "the century of competition", so people not only have to be literate and numerate but also need well developed thinking skills to survive in the rapidly changing world (Trilling & Fadel, 2012). Wagner (2008) asserts that knowledge, an outcome of education, is no longer believed to be sufficient to effectively cope with the challenges in the world. Nowadays, people all over the world encounter stiff competition in their search for jobs with better salaries and prospects. Therefore, it is a great demand for students to be equipped with 21st century skills including critical thinking skills in their classrooms for their survival among challenges and competition (Myo Myint, 2016).

In this changing world, it is believed that thinking, in particular, critical thinking is important, not to be the victims of misleading information. Moreover, thinking practice can promote deep learning as an alternative approach to what rote learning and memorization approaches cannot provide. Therefore, many countries have included the cognitive skills in their educational agenda (Trilling & Fadel, 2012).

In 2012, the Ministry of Education, Myanmar introduced integrated thinking skills while teaching content subjects in any education context to help students upgrade their life skills to survive in the challenging 21st century (Ministry of Education, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2012).

In ELT classes in Myanmar, all four skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing are integrated to develop communicative practices. However, teaching and learning a language for its own sake is not enough for students and they need to learn a language in order to develop and apply their thinking skills in situations that go beyond the language classroom (Myo Myint & Poe Poe, 2003). Richards (2006) suggests that language should serve as a means of developing higher order thinking skills, also known as critical and creative thinking. Therefore, teachers should help students develop their language skills as well as their thinking skills in ELT classes.

In the educational process, there are three main elements: teacher, student and textbook that represent the curriculum and textbook plays a crucial role in English language teaching context (Richards, 2006). Sheldon (1988) also indicates that textbooks not only represent the visual heart of any ELT programme but also offer considerable advantages for both teacher and student in ELT.

In Myanmar ELT context, locally produced coursebooks were usually used in previous decades (Myo Myint & Poe Poe, 2003). In 2012, for the purpose of developing ELT material, the international coursebooks were introduced. *Global* series, the Myanmar version was prescribed for English Specialization undergraduate students and English for Professional Purposes undergraduate students while *Straightforward* series, the Myanmar version for Arts and Science undergraduate students (non-English Specialization) in Myanmar.

According to Muijs and Reynolds (2011), "It is important to ask higher-level questions whenever possible to help develop [pupils'] students' thinking skills". Consequently, the analysis and evaluation of the questions or instructions used in ELT classes and instructions of activities in coursebooks need to be considered for the sake of curriculum review and development.

Therefore, the present study was conducted with the aim of motivating teachers to incorporate thinking skills into the subject area. With the purpose of highlighting practical ideas and applicable strategies for developing and actualizing critical thinking in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms in Myanmar, the coursebook global level 1 was evaluated in conformity with the cognitive process dimension in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001).

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present research was done to find out the answer to the questions:

- What levels of cognitive thinking skills do the instructions in the *global Coursebook Level 1* call for?
- Which particular cognitive level is called for by the instructions of the coursebook?

First, the instructions of activities in the coursebook global level 1, Myanmar version were listed. After that, they were analysed and evaluated using Bloom's revised Taxonomy, Cognitive Domain (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

There are different existing frameworks and criteria for textbook evaluation in terms of cognitive process. Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (BRT) can be a good choice to assess the basic skills, aligning teaching materials with the thinking skills (Krathwohl, 2002). As Hanna (2007) points out, the BRT "aligns learning objectives, curriculum, and assessment to link the complexity of learning with the cognitive domains" (p.9). Considering the above mentioned issues, evaluating ELT textbooks based on BRT bears significance to ELT learners and teachers as well as material developers.

Skills	Sample Prompts	Purpose	Level
Remembering	recognize, list, describe, identify, retrieve, name	Memorize and recall facts	**LOWER ORDER THINKING LEVEL**
Understanding	describe, explain, estimate, predict	Understand and interpret meaning	
Applying	implement, carry out, use, apply, show, solve	Apply knowledge to new situations	
Analyzing	compare, organize, site differences, deconstruct	Break down or examine information	**HIGHER ORDER THINKING LEVEL**
Evaluating	check, critique, judge, hypothese, conclude, explain	Judge or decide according to a set of criteria	
Creating	design, construct, plan, produce	Combine elements into a new pattern or product or structure	

Table 1:- Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (Thinking Skills: LOTS & HOTS)

Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001) identifies levels of cognitive learning, arranged from lower-order to higher-order levels of thinking as can be seen in Table 1. Each of the level builds in complexity from the previous level. In ELT classrooms, students are involved in practising thinking while learning language and develop their critical thinking and problem solving skills. Bloom's revised taxonomy also provides an important framework for teachers to focus on higher order thinking in designing tasks and crafting materials (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many previous studies explored the cognitive process, thinking levels, critical thinking and its notion of questions given in coursebooks, in different contexts, for instance, studies conducted by Al-Btoush,2012; Ali Roohnani, Farzaneh Taheri & MarziyehPoorzangeneh, 2014; Assaly & Smadi,2015; Gholamreza Zareian, & Mohammad Davoudi, 2015. It was learned that most of these studies were carried out according to Bloom's Original Taxonomy to analyze the textbook content of activities in line with thinking skills. A few studies, for example, the works of Ali Roohnani, Farzaneh Taheri & MarziyehPoorzangeneh (2014) and Gholamreza Zareian, & Mohammad Davoudi (2015) used Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001) to check the cognitive process of questions in coursebooks.

Al-Btoush (2012) conducted a study to identify and analyze the levels and types of questions available in the secondary stage textbooks of English language used in Jordan during the academic year 2011-2012. The purpose of the analysis was to determine the distribution of the questions over the six levels of cognitive domain of Bloom's Taxonomy. The results of the study revealed that most of the questions were within the first two levels of comprehension and knowledge (66%) and it reflected the preponderance of the low level questions in the four investigated textbooks.

In another study, "Evaluating Four Corners Textbook in Terms of Cognitive Processes Using Bloom's Revised Taxonomy", aimed at assessing whether *Four Corners* Textbooks represent various levels of cognitive processes and whether they were better alternatives compared with other available textbooks in the market. Ali Roohnani, Farzaneh Taheri & MarziyehPoorzangeneh (2014) evaluated two ELT textbooks (Four Corners Book 2 and Four Corners Book 3). Bloom's Revised Taxonomy was used as a tool for data analysis. The results indicated that the selected textbooks, much against expectations, failed to

engage learners successfully in the activities requiring higher levels of cognitive ability.

Gholamreza Zareian, & Mohammad Davoudi, (2015) investigated the types and levels of questions available in two ESP coursebooks, namely, "*English for the Students of Sciences* and *English for the Students of Engineering* taught in Iranian universities", which were based on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy of learning objectives. The overall finding of this study was that the most prevalent learning objectives pursued in the course books were lower-order cognitive processes and only few questions were found to address higher cognitive processes among the six levels of Bloom's New Taxonomy.

In the context of Israel, Assaly and Smadi (2015) conducted a research on *"Using Bloom's Taxonomy to evaluate the Cognitive Levels of Master Class Textbook's Questions"*. This study aimed at evaluating the cognitive levels of the questions for the reading texts in *Master Class* textbook. *Master Class* was a course book for the tenth grade high school students at Proficiency Level, Stage 1. A checklist based on Bloom's Taxonomy was the instrument used to categorize the cognitive levels of the questions collected from the Mastering Reading sections of Master Class textbook. The results showed that the author of Master Class emphasized the cognitive level of Comprehension, having 54% of the questions whereas only 3.7% and 6% of the questions on the cognitive levels of Knowledge and Application respectively. The results indicated that 36.3% of the textbook's questions emphasized higher-order thinking skills.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, few studies have been done in the Myanmar context to evaluate thinking skills that questions in textbook call for. Those studies dealt with the coursebooks used in Basic education level, for example, Khine Myat Thwe Aung (2015) did a research entitled *"A Study of Grade 11 English Textbook (2010) based on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy"*. The findings showed that in the English textbook published for Grade 11 students in public schools, the lower levels of thinking are the most widespread and the higher learning levels are not frequently found in the textbook.

Referring to the findings of those studies reviewed, the Lower Order Thinking Skills were mostly motivated by the questions in the coursebooks being analysed.

IV. RESEARCH METHOD

This study intended to evaluate the cognitive levels of the questions in the course book *global level 1*, Myanmar version. The data would be analysed in accordance with the six levels of cognitive domain, Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). The qualitative method was employed to analyse and evaluate the levels of thinking that the instructions or questions call for and a quantitative method was also employed merely to generate the frequencies and percentages of the thinking levels students had to have in doing tasks.

It is obvious that questions or instructions involved multiple cognitive skill levels in line with cognitive process in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001). However, in this study, the highest level of thinking that students had to attempt to do the activities by following the instructions in the coursebook was taken into account in collecting the data. In analysing and classifying the instructions in the coursebook, instruction that calls for students' compliance or performance of an activity is considered as a unit of analysis.

V. RESEARCH MATERIALS

The materials of the current study are instructions in *global English coursebook Level 1*, Myanmar version, designed by Lindsay Clandfield (2012). "*global*" is a four-level, multi-skills English series for first year university students in Myanmar. Each coursebook contains 160 pages, except level-4 which consists of 168 pages. Each book has ten units, focusing on a particular topic in different ways. Each unit consists of six two-page lessons. The first lessons: Vocabulary, Reading and Listening texts, Grammar, Writing and Speaking & Pronunciation are the core parts of the unit and the last two lessons include additional materials to practise such as Function Globally, Global English Writing Model, Study Skills and Review. All the instructions of activities in coursebook *global level 1* were analyzed and identified. However, the objectives, teaching methodologies used, and assessment of teaching and learning, perception of teachers and students of thinking skills were not considered in this study.

VI. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The data for this study was collected in two stages. During the first stage, the researcher gathered all the instructions for the tasks from the English *course book global level 1*. Then, the questions from unit one till unit ten were listed in a serial order. Then, in the second stage, the researcher classified all (776) instructions into levels of cognitive domain using research tool of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy and then calculated them. To examine the frequency and percentage of the cognitive levels, represented by the instructions from the coursebook, the quantitative study was carried out to be easier to interpret more specific and explicit data. The numbers of activities that call for different levels of thinking were then calculated in order to determine the percentages of thinking levels students had in doing the activities in each unit. All 776 questions from the course book were classified, analyzed, and categorized according to the six levels of New Bloom's Taxonomy (2001). After that, the frequency and percentage of the thinking levels that all instructions from all ten units were calculated.

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VII. FINDINGS

The study revealed that all levels of cognitive process were demanded by instructions of activities in the coursebook *global Level 1*. Table 2 indicates the frequencies and percentages of cognitive levels students have to attempt in doing the tasks in the coursebook in each unit. The result showed that in all units of the coursebook, instructions called for the *applying* level of thinking the most and the *creating* level of thinking the least.

Unit	Students' Thinking Levels in doing activities												Total No. of Instructions
	Lower Order Thinking Skills						Higher Order Thinking Skills						
	Remembering		Understanding		Applying		Analysing		Evaluating		Creating		
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	
1	10	14.49	16	23.19	22	31.88	3	4.35	15	15	3	4.35	69
2	16	19.05	16	19.05	25	29.76	8	9.52	16	19.05	3	3.57	84
3	16	21.05	18	23.68	18	23.68	6	7.89	13	17.11	5	6.58	76
4	11	15.07	19	26.03	20	27.40	7	9.59	13	17.81	3	4.11	73
5	8	11.43	19	27.14	21	30.00	6	8.57	11	15.71	5	7.14	70
6	16	19.05	19	22.62	22	26.19	9	10.71	13	15.48	5	5.95	84
7	12	15.19	20	25.32	22	27.85	1	13.92	13	16.46	1	1.27	79
8	12	16.67	17	23.61	20	27.78	8	11.11	10	13.89	5	6.94	72
9	13	14.77	21	23.86	26	29.55	7	7.95	15	17.05	6	6.82	88
10	14	17.28	18	22.22	23	28.40	7	8.64	16	19.75	3	3.70	82
Total	128	***16.49***	183	23.58	219	**28.22**	72	9.28	135	***17.4***	39	**5.03**	**776 (100%)**
	LOTS → **530** instructions **(68.29%)**						**HOTS →** **246** instructions **(31.71%)**						

Table 2:- Frequency and Percentage of cognitive process levels of instructions in *global level 1 coursebook*

The frequencies of the instructions of the six cognitive levels range from 39 (5.03%) for *creating* to 219 (28.22%) for *applying* level. The findings indicated that the *evaluating* level appeared at a percentage of 17.40% which was nearly equivalent to the *remembering* level, obtaining 16.49% of total 776 instructions given in the coursebook. The overall finding of this study was that 530 instructions (68.29%) needed Lower Order Thinking Skills while 246 instructions (31.71%) demanded for Higher Order Thinking Skills as shown in Table 2.

Figure 1 presents the different ranges of the percentages of each thinking level that students have to reach in doing the activities in the *global coursebook Level 1*. The bar chart (Figure 1) highlights the percentage of thinking skills, in order of being the most to the least demanded by instructions as: applying 28.22%, understanding 23.58%, evaluating 17.4%, remembering 16.49%, analyzing 9.28%, and creating 5.03% respectively.

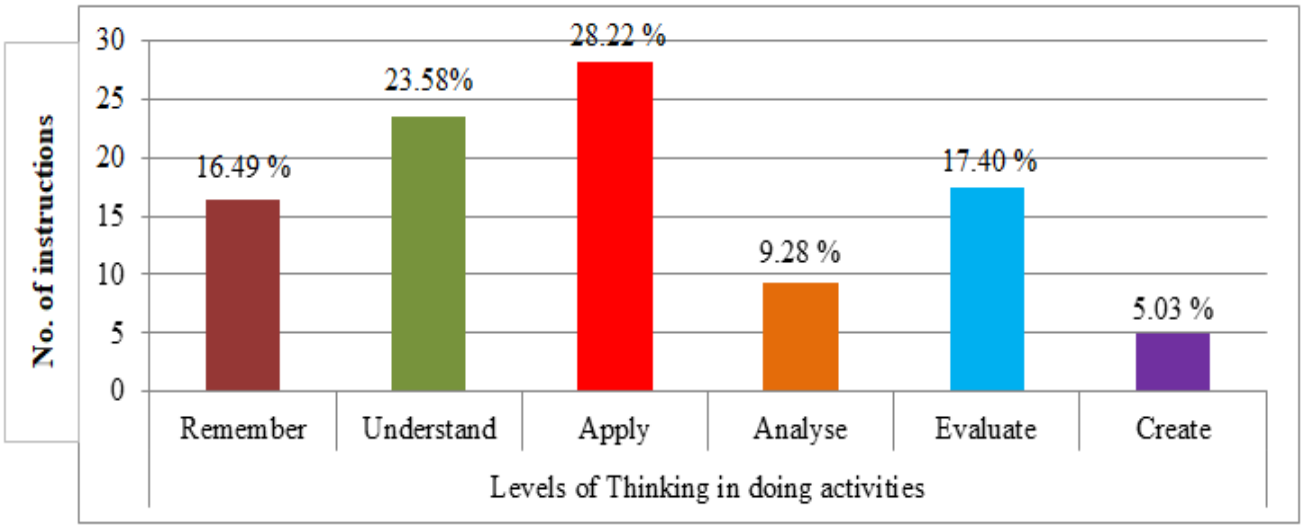

Fig 1:- Percentage of each cognitive thinking level of instructions

VIII. DISCUSSION

The present study is similar to the studies conducted by Ali Roohnani, Farzaneh Taheri & MarziyehPoorzangeneh (2014) and by Gholamreza Zareian, & Mohammad Davoudi (2015) in the sense that it focused on the analysis of ELT textbook questions used in tertiary level in the light of the new version of Bloom's Taxonomy (remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating). This study analyzed the *global level 1 coursebook* used for the first year university students in Myanmar and the research materials analysed in the mentioned two studies were ELT textbooks and ESP coursebooks used in universities. However, the study is different from other three previous studies reviewed in the level of the class the coursebook was prescribed as textbooks analysed in the studies by Al-Btoush (2012), Assaly & Smadi (2015) and Khine Myat Thwe Aung (2015) were used in secondary level. Although the research materials focused are different in terms of levels they were used, the study is similar to Khine Myat Thwe Aung's (2015) study in using Bloom's Revised Taxonomy as the tool for analysis. On the other hand, the recent research is different from Al-Btoush's (2012) study and Assaly & Smadi's (2015) study as they dealt with the secondary stage textbooks, using the old version of Bloom's Taxonomy (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation).

All the studies reviewed agreed on the fact that all books they analyzed showed predominance of lower-level questions (Al-Btoush,2012; Ali Roohnani, Farzaneh Taheri & MarziyehPoorzangeneh,2014; Assaly & Smadi,2015; Khine Myat Thwe Aung,2015, Gholamreza Zareian, & Mohammad Davoudi, 2015). The results of these studies indicated that possibly it is easier for teachers and authors to write lower cognitive level questions than questions on higher level. It seems that the authors who wrote textbook questions did not pay adequate attention to develop the students' thinking and they found it easier to write lower level questions than higher level ones. Possibly, the learners for whom the questions were directed to were unable to deal with higher-level demands. The results of the reviewed researches showed that most questions emphasized the knowledge or the comprehension levels. However, the finding of the present study was contrary to those of the previous studies in that all instructions in the *global level 1* call for applying level the most while the number of activities in the textbook *Master Class* demand the cognitive level of application the lowest.

According to Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), applying level of thinking requires materializing the thinking in the mind. The questions, tasks, activities and exercises which require learners to relate the concepts they have learned to their context of learning and personal life were prepared in the target book. Therefore, the *global level 1* coursebook writer is successful to some extent in motivating learners to apply what is learned in the classroom to novel real life situations, to find out solution and solve problems through instructions in the coursebook.

The results of the analysis showed that understanding was the second dominant skill in the coursebook. Instructions helped learners practise translating and paraphrasing the concepts at hand. According to the findings of the study, the coverage of the two skills: applying and understanding in *global level 1 students' book* was virtually satisfactory.

As seen in Figure 1, even though evaluating level of thinking skills appeared to be not adequately tapped in the book, it received more frequency than analysing skill and remembering skill. To develop evaluating skill, priority should be given to tasks that require learners' evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of an argument, an event, a thing and questions or instructions. It is suggested that material developers should implant questions, tasks, activities and exercises which require learners to suggest solutions, evaluate the solutions and propose alternative solutions.

According to the values obtained, remembering thinking skill which is the basis and beginning in thinking process was slightly less focused than evaluating which is one of the higher order thinking skills. The result reflects that the coursebook writer seems to reduce practice of remembering thinking skill which is the lowest level in Bloom's Revised model. It reduced rote learning or memorization and increased more practices of higher level cognitive skill to equip students with essential critical thinking skill to survive in the 21st century.

As the findings of the study showed, the instructions in the coursebook *global level 1* appeared not to be strong in triggering analysing level of thinking through a few tasks including comparing, contrasting and distinguishing the ideas. Although analysing skill appeared less frequently in instructions in the coursebook, this skill was commonly tapped while students practised evaluating thinking skill in doing activities. To improve the quality of the book with regard to analysing skill, material developers can include questions which require learners to identify the underlying causes or sources of the issue and activities that ask learners to prioritize the most important ideas should be included.

The findings of the study indicated that the creative thinking skill was moderately targeted. Learners are more likely to foster this skill if they have more exposure to tasks that require them to devise metaphors or analogies for their experience and concepts discussed. Tasks which engage students in finding solutions or building strategies for the problems will generate the creativity of students.

The result generally implied that the inclusion of the applying and understanding skills in the book was satisfactory, while the frequencies of evaluating and remembering skills can be considered moderate to low. The instructions for analyzing and creating levels of thinking were not strongly involved.

The result showed that *global textbook level 1* included instructions that required both lower level and higher level cognitive demands. Bloom (1956) emphasizes that offering of lower level information to students is a basis to move to upper levels of cognition and students need to know certain basic information before they can engage in higher order thinking. Therefore, having more instructions calling for Lower Order Thinking Skills than those motivating Higher Order Thinking Skills in the coursebook might not affect the judgment on the textbook.

The average number of the instructions that require high cognitive demands in the textbook suggested that the author seemed to consider the importance of training students on these levels of questions. It would eventually contribute to an effective EFL content especially at the university level or even for daily life needs. In line with EFL revised curriculum requirements, the *global level 1* textbook author seems to have considered to increase the number of questions that require HOTS to some extent.

IX. CONCLUSION

One of the crucial issues in the content of the course books is the questions or instructions containing activities (Rosenshine, B., Meister, C. & Chapman, S., 1996). The questions in *the coursebook global level 1* were studied in this research in order to distinguish the activities in the course book which reflected various thinking skills as stated in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy cognitive domain.

The overall finding of this study was that the majority of the questions called for the lower level cognitive skills and only few questions tapped higher cognitive levels. Therefore, the results of this research highlighted that the *course book global level 1* can help students develop lower cognitive skills more than higher thinking skills. Hence, it is suggested that multilevel questions and instructions provoking higher thinking skills should be devised and incorporated at the lessons using the coursebook in Myanmar ELT classrooms. Accordingly, it is proposed that tasks of various cognitive demands should be included and the materials in English textbooks or in any coursebook should be adapted to help students improve their cognitive thinking skills in ELT context.

In the light of the findings of the present study, some suggestions for further research to conduct in-depth qualitative research by interviewing the textbook developers and users to see their perspectives. It is also suggested to do an action research on the effect of using HOTs questions following Bloom's Revised Taxonomy or any valuable and sound strategies and models. The study highlighted that the teacher's books are worth to be referred in evaluating the coursebooks and their workbooks are also to be analysed to have the complete description of the extent of thinking skills the *global* series demand.

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