

## Developing Critical Thinking through EFL Textbooks: A Study at Secondary and Higher Secondary School Certificate Level in Pakistan

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### ABSTRACT

Critical thinking is such an active process of purposeful reflection in which judgment is suspended. Critical thinking involves not only knowledge and comprehension (lower levels of learning) but also analysis, synthesis and evaluation (higher-order thinking). This study aims to know to what extent critical thinking skills are embedded and focused in EFL textbooks at secondary school certificate (SSC) and higher secondary school certificate (HSSC) level, examine the role of EFL textbooks used in Pakistan in promoting EFL learners' critical thinking skills and know, of lower and higher order thinking, which level is better developed through EFL textbooks. To achieve these objectives of the study, the researcher has conducted this study at two levels. Firstly, the researcher has made cognitive classification of those questions which have been given at the end of every lesson of the selected EFL textbooks. Secondly, the researcher has designed four reading and writing tasks (RWT) for the participants of four classes. Every task consists of a "reading passage" and a writing task comprising six questions based on the given reading passage and consists of 20 marks. The findings of this study reveal that the least focused critical thinking skill in the EFL textbooks is that of "create" whereas "remember" and "understand" are the most focused critical thinking skills.

**Keywords:** Critical thinking, EFL textbooks, remember, evaluate, create

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### Introduction

The critical thinking tradition requires the instruction of such skills as enable individuals to make the best use of their mental abilities and implies the self-improvement of their thinking by means of the introduction of such standards as can help them assess thinking so that they may eventually limit the errors of thought. This approach entails the assumption that human beings have the capacity for good reasoning which can

be harnessed and honed. Paul (1992) claims that thinking well means the imposition of discipline and restraint on thinking with the help of intellectual standards so that a perfect level of thinking which is otherwise unnatural or unlikely in spontaneous and undisciplined thought can be ensured. Processing and interpreting the available data, making assumptions, monitoring the implications of decisions, analysing different frames of references and points of view and

distinguishing reasoning from subjective reaction are the salient qualities of a good thinker. Wu and Pie (2018) claim that educational endeavours have put the development of critical thinking on their agenda even in Asian countries where various critical thinking-oriented programs have been established.

### 1.1 Defining Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is such an active process of purposeful reflection in which judgment is suspended (Dewey, 1910). To Ennis (1985), reflective and reasonable thinking focuses “on what to believe or do”. The researcher also claims that critical thinking involves not only knowledge and comprehension (lower levels of learning) but also analysis, synthesis and evaluation (higher-order thinking). According to Sobkowiak (2016), critical thinking does not merely mean recollecting and recalling factual concepts and knowledge. Critical thinking also means to formulate hypothesis, question and investigate, notice similarities and differences, compare, find alternatives, explore viewpoints and draw conclusions. Likewise, critical thinking is styled as “disciplined skill” (Scriven and Paul, 2003) and “the development of logical reasoning abilities” (Hallett, 1984). The ability of critical thinking also needs dedication, skill and energy (Petress, 2004). Critical thinking is an intellectual ability not without a purpose. It is also a non-competitive and collaborative endeavour. This ability renders novel approaches, new insights, fresh perspectives and new means of comprehending and conceiving things (Facione, 2010). According to this researcher, the cognitive skills of analysis, interpretation, inference, evaluation, explanation and exploration are essential to critical thinking. Apart

from these cognitive skills, Facione (2010) has also identified those personal traits which characterize a good critical thinker. These personal attributes include inquisitiveness, alertness, self-confidence, open-mindedness and fairmindedness.

### 1.2 Critical Thinking and Language Teaching

Shirkhani and Fahim (2011) assert that the promotion of CT in FLT classroom is highly significant as it renders the language learners capable of thinking critically and creatively to reach the set objectives of curriculum. Critical thinking also makes them capable of using their thinking skills and understanding language and its contents. While discussing the significance of critical thinking in FLT classroom, Shikhani and Fahim (2011) point out certain pay-offs which can be reaped by teaching and developing the EFL learners’ critical thinking. It helps the EFL learners take charge of their thinking, monitor their ways of thinking and expands their learning experience as it has a strong correlation with the learners’ achievement. Critical thinking also develops the ESL learners’ writing ability, communicative competence and language proficiency. Language development and critical thinking are closely related to the teaching of higher-level thinking skills in foreign language classroom. (Shirkhani & Fahim, 2011, p.112). The significance of the integration of critical thinking in ELT has also been highlighted by Vdovina (2013). According to her, critical thinking helps the EFL learners communicate in foreign language by accepting the cultural differences “not as a deviation from the natural way associated with their mother tongue but as a fully natural way”. Thus, critical thinking makes the learning process

more enjoyable and culturally enriching for the EFL learners even at the beginning level. Moreover, Vdovina (2013) justifies the integration of critical thinking in ELT on the basis of rapid mobility of the international students and the use of English as a medium of instruction across the globe. Critical thinking makes the process of active and interactive learning easier and more comprehensive as it encourages the EFL learners to compare views, evaluate arguments and probe into the intellectual standards of clarity and accuracy. Dewey (1933) believes that learning to think is the prime goal of education. So, it becomes essential for the learners to promote and apply their critical thinking skills to solve the complicated problems and make critical choices in the wake of information explosion and rapid technological changes. Kohzadi et al (2014) assert that “CT is a preferable pedagogical result (p. 65). Glen (1995) also believes that critical thinking is an integral part of pedagogy. Critical thinking ensures the promotion of ethical values, renders purpose for seeking knowledge, helps in problem solving and is a “long-established skill” (Dressel and Mayhew, 1954). Khan (2017) acknowledges the tremendous importance of the learning and teaching of English language in the specific context of Pakistan. She also seconds the belief that a certain extent of independence in thinking is ensured by the process of language learning as critical thinking and learners’ achievements are highly correlated. While discussing the pay-offs of developing critical thinking in language learning, Khan (2017) citing Mahuddin et al. (2004) claims that language learners can enjoy critical and creative thinking capability, decision taking ability, language comprehension and

life-long learning skills by enhancing their critical thinking skills.

### **1.3 Critical Thinking across Curriculum**

Critical thinking is very essential in language learning as it enables learners to connect their previous knowledge with the current level of their knowledge. Critical thinking also activates learners’ cognitive skills like memory, interpretation, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation so that successful and meaningful learning can take place (Waters, 2006). The ability of critical thinking also helps to develop language learners’ performance not only in language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing but also their affective, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies. That is why critical thinking is also used as a tool in teaching and learning a second language (Kadel, 2014). Foster and Pikkert (1996) also posit that critical thinking should be incorporated in every subject so that students may develop the skills of evaluation, reflection, judgment and analysis in the course of learning. Likewise, Stroupe (2006) seconds the idea that the inclusion of critical thinking in educational system can ensure second language learners’ multidimensional development. The incorporation of critical thinking in curriculum not only ensures cooperative and interactive learning and teaching but also replaces the typical curricula in language learning.

### **1.4 Research Objectives of the Study**

The research objectives of the present study are given as follows;

- To know to what extent critical thinking skills are embedded and focused in EFL textbooks at secondary school certificate

(SSC) and higher secondary school certificate (HSSC) level.

- To examine the role of EFL textbooks used in Pakistan in promoting EFL learners' critical thinking skills.
- To know, of lower and higher order thinking, which level is better developed through EFL textbooks.

### 1.5 Research Questions of the Study

The research questions of the present study are given as follows;

- How much critical thinking skills are embedded and focused in EFL textbooks at secondary school certificate (SSC) and higher secondary school certificate (HSSC) level?
- What is the role of EFL textbooks used in Pakistan in promoting EFL learners' critical thinking skills?
- Which level, of lower and higher-order thinking, is better developed through EFL textbooks?

## 2. Literature Review

The literature reviewed in this study comprises of two sections i.e., theoretical framework of the study and the related studies.

### 2.1 Theoretical framework of the study

The cultivation and growth of learners' critical thinking and cognitive level and rendering them an opportunity to grow systematically (Tarman & Kuran, 2015) by exposing them to easy-to-hard content is one the cherished educational objectives of textbooks. Textbooks contribute a lot to foster the thinking skills of higher level as they can exercise an important influence not on

the style and content of a classroom but also the instructional mode of a teacher (Wu & Pie, 2018). Recognizing the significance and need of critical thinking, many countries have included critical thinking in their English textbooks to materialise their educational goals. Textbooks play an imperative role in the process of language learning and making language learners particularly EFL learners come across social, cultural, religious and linguistic (Ahmad and Shah, 2014). Thus, textbooks open a window for EFL learners not only to linguistic aspects of a target language but also to its cultural aspects (Azizifar et al., 2010; Sardi, 2002; Tomlinson, 2008). Likewise, most of the educators second the view that critical thinking must be taught (Presseisen, 1988; Perkins & Salmon, 1989) so that learners can be engaged in the learning of rich, meaningful and domain-specific subject matter (Fahim & Eslamdoost, 2014) because critical thinking has got prime importance in the field of education (Gelder, 2005) as a goal (Arend, 2009). Therefore, it is the responsibility of institutions to lead students beyond "simple mental activities" (Dressel & Mayhew, 1954). The realization of the instruction of critical thinking ability because of its effectiveness and prominence in education has been highlighted and discussed by many scholars (Herstein et al., 1986; Lehman & Nisbett, 1990; Perkins, 1987; Royalty, 1995).

#### 2.1.1 Teachability of Critical Thinking

While discussing the teachability of critical thinking, Rezaei et al. (2011) categorize the teaching of critical thinking into two categories. They maintain that the teaching of critical thinking includes the enhancing of students' reasoning skills and processes

as well as developing their attitudes and awareness related to critical thinking. They believe that teachers can develop students' critical thinking skills and critical attitudes by making an effective use of discussion, questions, reflection in a context and inferential questions for they second the idea that critical course intervention is more beneficial than infusion approach. To Rezaei et al. (2011) the teaching of critical thinking is, in fact, the teaching of higher-order reasoning which can be best taught through active learning methods particularly teacher questions so that genuine communication can be realized in the class. Mehta and Al-Mahrooqi (2015) also maintain that critical thinking is a teachable skill as it is a conscious act. But the question how it can be taught is a debatable issue particularly in EFL context.

Lin (2014) believes that there is a need to teach critical thinking in Asian classrooms and there is a possibility of teaching it, too. The author claims that teaching critical thinking does not mean to teach some philosophical concepts rather it means to teach "for and about" it. Teaching about critical thinking involves the teaching of relevant skills and their application in solving problems. Whereas teaching for critical thinking means expanding opportunities for establishing attitude towards and enhancing the ESL learners' disposition and readiness to use those relevant skills and to engage in critical thinking. Rezaei et al. (2011) have pronounced that CT is a cornerstone in language education because developing learners' CT helps students involve in the reflective learning of information and understanding comprehensively the world around them. According to Khan (2017), the development of critical thinking skills is direly needed especially in the pedagogical context of

Functional English in Higher Education in Pakistan. She throws light on some steps which can ensure the development of critical thinking skills among the language learners. For instance, she claims that teacher's role should be revisited, critical thinking should be rewarded in the examinations and such tasks should be designed as can encourage the students to question the material they read or hear and make probe into the author's intended meaning.

### **2.1.2 Halpern's Four-Part Model for Critical Thinking Instruction**

Halpern (2003) claims that it can be proved with empirical evidence that thinking can be improved. He maintains that positive effects can be reaped by embedding thinking skills instructions and courses in other courses and these effects can be transferred to many situations. A lot of substantial evidence is present to demonstrate that education can be used to improve the ability of critical thinking by designing specific instructions which encourage and help transfer critical thinking skills to multiple situations and domains of knowledge. The instructions which are designed specifically for the enhancement of critical thinking skills render very important gains. The author also claims that to improve critical thinking skills a systematic educational effort is needed as critical thinking is not an automatic by-product. An overt and self-conscious focus on the development of critical thinking and the inclusion of examples from multiple domains are the pronounced requisites to maximize the transfer of thinking skills.

Halpern's (1998) research work "Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum" on critical thinking is very



influential in the domain of psychology. There are five types of skills which mark Halpern's framework of thinking. These skills include argument analysis, verbal reasoning, problem solving, hypothesis testing and decision making. But the most important aspect of Halpern's model is that of metacognitive monitoring of thinking to improve the regulation of thinking. The main thrust of Halpern's (1998) framework is on cognitive process and "plan-do-review" mode of conscious effort. To Halpern (1997), critical thinking has two dimensions i.e. cognitive and concrete. In other words, her concept of critical thinking is cognitive as well as conative. This model can be applicable for different disciplines because of the general activities, problems and exercises prepared by her (Moseley et al., 2005).

For getting deeper and comprehensive insight into multidimensional nature and teachability of critical thinking, this study has reviewed and discussed the schematic model of the critical thinking instruction process presented by Halpern (1998). She has presented a four-part model for the instruction of critical thinking. These four parts have been discussed as follows;

#### **2.1.2.1 Skills Approach to Critical Thinking**

A skills approach to critical thinking is based on two assumptions. First, there exist clearly definable and identifiable thinking skills that can be recognized and applied appropriately if the language learners are taught these skills. The second assumption is that students can become more effective thinkers if they recognize and apply these skills. There are some generic skills which help a critical thinker in various

situations. Halpern (1998) claims that a critical thinker must possess the skills like:

- Recognition of semantic slanting and guilt by possession
- Seeking out contradictory evidence
- Using the metacognitive knowledge that allows novices to monitor their own performance and to decide when additional help is needed
- Generating a reasoned method for selecting among several possible courses of actions
- Recalling relevant information when it is needed
- Using skills for learning new techniques efficiently and relating new knowledge to information that was previously learned
- Using numerical information including the ability to think probabilistically and express thoughts numerically (Halpern, 1998, pp.14)

#### **2.1.2.2 Disposition for Effortful Thinking and Learning**

For a critical thinker, developing disposition or attitude counts more than mere reading books and learning critical thinking skills. Motivation and willingness to utilize efforts to gather information and demonstrate perseverance in case of challenging situations are essential requisites to be a good critical thinker. A critical thinker is expected to demonstrate some dispositions and attitudes which have been given as follows;

- Willingness to plan
- Flexibility
- Persistence
- Willingness to self-correct
- Admission of errors
- Changing mind when the evidence changes

- Being mindful
- Consensus seeking

### 2.1.2.3 Transfer of Training

Halpern (1998) claims that it is imperative for a critical thinker to possess a large list of critical thinking skills and to be ready to use them. It means that a critical thinker must be cognizant of the time or need when critical thinking is required and must be skilled to select the most appropriate skill to grapple with the situation. To this end, the author suggests;

“Critical thinkers need to create the recall cues from the structural aspects of the problem or argument, so that when the structural aspects are present, they can serve for retrieval.” (Halpern, 1998, pp.18)

### 2.1.2.4 Metacognitive Monitor

Metacognition refers to our knowledge of what we know (or what we know about what we know) and the use of this knowledge to direct further learning activities. (Halpern, 1998, pp.18) In other words, in critical thinking, thinking process is monitored to make some progress towards an appropriate goal, accuracy and good use of time and mental effort. Developing the habit of monitoring means to be good critical thinker and learner. Halpern (1998) styles metacognition an “executive” or “boss” function. The author claims that the more learners engage in metacognitive activities the better thinkers and learners will come out of them.

### 2.1.3 Anderson and Krathwohl’s Revised Version of Bloom’s Taxonomy

Bloom (1956) and his colleagues are among those who have adopted an

educational approach to critical thinking. To teach and assess higher-order critical thinking, Bloom (1956) and his associates have presented a taxonomy for educational practitioners for the skills to process information. This taxonomy is hierarchical consisting of six levels. According to Kenned et al. (1991), three top levels are related to critical thinking. Krathwohl (2002) claims that Bloom and his colleagues have postulated the levels of this taxonomy with the help of keen observation and extensive discussions with learners. However, Huit (1998) has raised question on the hierarchical nature of Bloom’s taxonomy as being successful at lower levels is a requisite for the skills at any level. Draper (2016) has modified this taxonomy and presented a useful summary. According to Khan (2017), the problems regarding the “hierarchical nature of the taxonomy” and “the evidence of understanding” have been addressed through various modifications. But Sternberg (1986) argues that in the context of assessment, the classroom observation constitutes the base of this taxonomy and this thing renders this taxonomy advantageous.

Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) presented a revised version of Bloom’s taxonomy in 2001. This taxonomy focused on educational objectives. Basically, Bloom’s taxonomy was widely used to develop classroom activities, plan instructions and develop skills among students. Cognitive, affective and psychomotor were main domains of this taxonomy. In educational setting, the cognitive domain was mostly resorted to. Moreover, the cognitive domain consists of six categories. Among these six categories, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation are termed as “abilities and

skills”. Whereas, “knowledge” is considered a prerequisite for the rest of the categories. In other words, “knowledge” is the corner stone of Bloom’s taxonomy. Another feature of this taxonomy is that each of the five categories builds on and consists of more advanced skills than its predecessor because of their cumulative order (Moseley et al., 2005).

Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) revised Bloom’s taxonomy by replacing the “nouns” of the original taxonomy with “verbs”. For instance, the category “application” was renamed “apply”. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) justify this major shift by claiming that this revision would provide teachers with more extensive examples and practice. Moreover, two other categories of the

original taxonomy were also renamed by the authors. For instance, “comprehension” was renamed “understand” and “synthesis” was renamed “create” in the revised version of the taxonomy. Apart from this, the category “create” replaced “evaluation” at the highest and final place in the revised version. Unlike the original taxonomy, the revised framework does not have cumulative hierarchy. In this regard, Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) claim that one can master any level of the revised taxonomy in accordance with one’s condition and task. But despite the breakup of the hierarchy of the original taxonomy, there still exists some hierarchy in its overall complexity (Moseley et al., 2005). This can be illustrated by a figure given as follows;

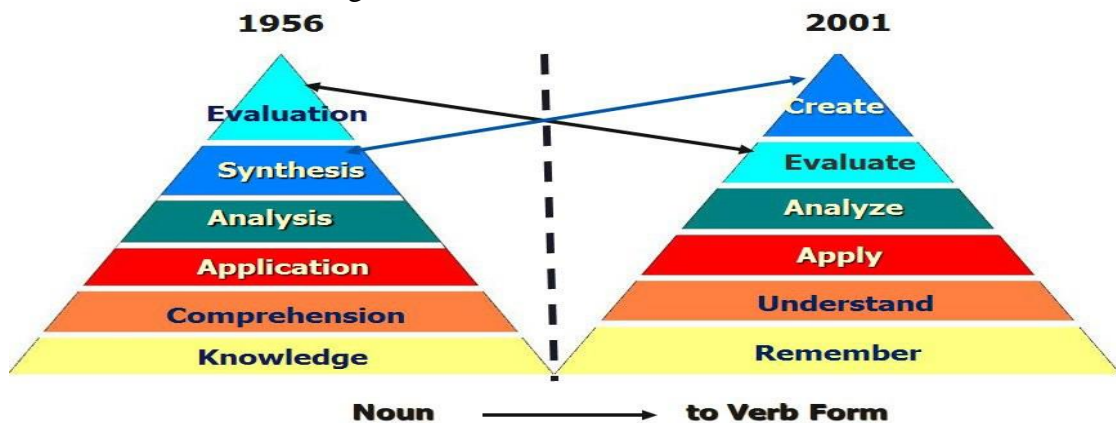


Figure 2.7 Visual representation of Bloom’s original and revised taxonomy

Adopted from Wilson, Leslie O. (2001)

The criticism made for Anderson and Krathwohl’s (2001) framework by experts is related to the issues like direct instruction, principles of learning, accommodation of classroom learning and lesson planning, description of metacognition as type of knowledge, motivation and self-regulation of teaching (Hattie et al., 1996; Mahmood, 2017; Moseley et al., 2004).

The criticism levied against this tradition is that this approach to critical thinking confuses intellectual skills with intellectual processes. Another point which Cosgrove (2013) raises regarding this tradition is that the “criterion” element of “critical” is sometimes missing. The intellectual processes can be made more critical by adding an intellectual standard or criterion.

## 2.2 Review of the related studies



Wu and Pei (2018) have conducted a study to investigate to what extent the questions of EFL textbooks manifest critical thinking. The researchers have selected three textbooks as research material for their study. These textbooks include English through Culture, Contemporary College English and Think English. Different reading comprehension questions from these textbooks constituted the material for the analysis of this study. The coding scheme for this study was based on Bloom's original taxonomy. This study reports that the selected books mainly develop the EFL learners' lower-level of critical thinking as the major portion of the questions comprise of the knowledge and comprehension questions. Regarding the role of EFL textbooks in the development of English language learners, the studies which have been conducted in different contexts have reported that mostly EFL textbooks focus and develop EFL learners' lower-level of critical thinking (Igbaria, 2013; Assaly & Samadi, 2015; Olimat, 2015; Yun, 2010; Sobkowiak, 2016).

While discussing the infusion of critical thinking into English coursebooks, Ilyas (2016) contends that critical thinking can be infused into coursebooks by integrating and adding such activities as can help EFL learners to attempt the tasks related to clarification, assumption, reason and evidence, viewpoint, implication, questions, summary and conclusion and agreement and disagreement. Ahmad and Shah (2014) have explored the suitability of textbook contents from the perspective of EFL teachers with reference to Saudi EFL learners. The researchers have used mixed-method approach to conduct this study and collected data with the help of a two-part instrument. The subjects of this

study consist of English language teachers from different countries. This study has found out that the contents of the selected textbook do not bring about any significant change in Saudi EFL learners' attitude towards the target culture. This study also reports that there is a significantly positive relationship between EFL learners' attitude and their English language proficiency.

Pervaiz and Imran (2013) have conducted a study to measure how much EFL textbooks enhance EFL learners' critical thinking skills. To this end, the researchers selected three EFL textbooks which were used to teach English as a foreign language in Iran. This study has used a checklist based on Likert-scale. This checklist comprises of twelve skills. This study reports that the EFL textbooks used in Iran chiefly include the critical thinking skills of knowledge, comprehension and application. It has also been reported that these textbooks embed the skills of analysis, deduction, creative thinking and synthesis very sparsely. So far the critical thinking skills of induction, balanced-thinking, evaluation and multiple perspective are concerned, this study claims that the Iranian EFL textbooks hardly tap and harness them. Fathi et al. (2019) have investigated the relationship between Iranian EFL learners' critical thinking skills and their performance in accomplishing textbook activities. These researchers have used critical thinking questionnaire and a test comprising of textbook activities as research instruments to achieve the research objectives of their study. This study has found out that there is a significant correlation between Iranian EFL learners' critical thinking skills and their performance in textbook activities.

### 3. Research Methodology

The present study is primarily quantitative. This study strives to examine the role of EFL textbooks used in Pakistan in promoting EFL learners' critical thinking skills and know, of lower and higher order thinking, which level is better developed through EFL textbooks. The detail about population, sample, material and procedure of this study goes as follows.

#### 3.1 Population of the Study

All the students of secondary school and higher secondary school level constitute the population of the study.

#### 3.2 Sample of the Study

The sample of this study consists of 200 students of secondary school and higher secondary school level. Every level further consists of two classes. For instance, the level of secondary school consists of two classes i.e. Class IX and Class X. Likewise, the higher secondary school level also consists of two classes i.e. Class XI and Class XII.

#### 3.3 Profile of the Participants

The researcher has selected those participants who are the representative of the population of the study. These participants study English as compulsory subject. Basically, these participants belong to four classes i.e. two classes from each level. Moreover, they study science subjects. For instance, the students of pre-intermediate level study Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics along with English as compulsory subjects. In the same way, the students

of intermediate level are the students of pre-engineering and pre-medical groups.

#### 3.4 Materials

To achieve the set objectives of the present study, the researcher has conducted this study at two levels. Firstly, the researcher has made cognitive classification of those questions which have been given at the end of every lesson of the selected EFL textbooks. These textbooks have been published by the Punjab Textbook Board (Pakistan) and are used to teach English language at secondary school and higher secondary school level. This cognitive classification has been made in accordance with the six categories of Bloom's revised taxonomy. Secondly, the researcher has designed four reading and writing tasks (RWT) for the participants of four classes. Every task consists of a "reading passage" and a writing task comprising six questions based on the given reading passage and consists of 20 marks. These reading passages have been selected from the textbooks which are taught in the four classes i.e., IX, X, XI, and XII. These textbooks have been published by Punjab Curriculum & Textbook Board (PC&TB), Pakistan in conformity with the guidelines provided by the National Curriculum 2006. According to National Curriculum (2006), the textbooks which are taught at secondary school certificate (SSC) level have such activities at the end of every lesson as can help the EFL learners to develop their critical thinking and higher-order learning skills. The detail of the contents of these textbooks have been given in the table 1 as follows;

**Table 1: A brief account of EFL textbook contents**

Level	Book Title	No. of Units/Lessons	Type of Genre	Publisher
SSC Part I	English 9	12	Poems, Short Stories, Autobiographies & Essays	Punjab Curriculum & Textbook Board (PCTB)
SSC Part II	English 10	13	Poems, Short Stories, Autobiographies & Essays	PCTB
HSSC Part I	Book I	15	Short Stories	PCTB
	Book III (Section I)	20	Poems	PCTB
	Book III (Section II)	3	Plays	
HSSC Part II	Book II (Section I)	10	Prose (Articles)	PCTB
	Book II (Section II)	5	Prose (Heroes)	
	Book IV	18	Novel	PCTB

These tasks have been designed keeping Bloom's revised taxonomy in view. The questions for the writing tasks were designed in accordance with the sub-domains of cognitive learning of Bloom's revised taxonomy. These domains include remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate and create.

### 3.5 Grading Rubrics and Points Guideline for Writing Tasks

The researcher has used 3-point scoring scale i.e. unskilled, beginning skills and highly skilled as grading rubrics and points guideline for the four Writing

Tasks (WTs). The unskilled students got zero score; the students having beginning skills were awarded half score while the highly skilled students were credited with full score. The students whose answer was inaccurate and unclear were given zero mark for their answers and the students whose answers were not perfectly accurate rather partially correct and partially incorrect were awarded half credit. Full credit was given to those answers which were accurate, insightful and clearly and precisely stated. The following table illustrates this grading rubrics and points guidelines for this test.

**Table 2: Grading Rubric and Points Guideline for Writing Tasks (WTs)**

Level of Skill	Key Skills	Sore
Unskilled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inaccurate</li> <li>• Unclear</li> </ul>	Zero Score
Beginning Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partially Correct</li> <li>• Partially Incorrect</li> </ul>	Half Score
Skilled/High Skilled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate</li> <li>• Clear</li> <li>• Precise</li> </ul>	Full Score

- Insightful

#### 4. Results

The results and findings of the present study have been discussed here in the light of the set objectives of the study as follows;

##### 4.1 Cognitive classification of EFL textbook questions

This study has classified all the questions of those EFL textbooks which are taught at the secondary school certificate (SSC) and higher secondary school certificate (HSSC) level to ascertain which of the critical thinking skills have been focussed the most. To this end, this study has found out that “remember” and “understand” which are among the low-level thinking skills are focussed the most. For among the questions which are asked at the end of these EFL textbooks, there are 33%

questions which target the critical thinking skill of “remember” whereas 42.2% questions focus on the critical thinking skill of “understand”. In other words, more than 75% of the questions of these EFL textbooks target only these two skills which are branded as the lower order thinking skills (LOTS). So far as the critical thinking skills of “apply”, “analyse” and “evaluate” are concerned, this study has found out these textbooks have 7.4%, 11% and 5.6% questions to target and develop EFL learners’ these skills respectively. On the other hand, only 4% questions have been included in SSC and HSSC textbooks to develop EFL learners’ critical thinking skill of “create” which among the higher order thinking skills (HOTS). Table 3 highlights this cognitive classification of EFL textbook questions as follows;

**Table 3: Cognitive classification of EFL textbook questions**

S. No.	Critical Thinking Skills	Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Level (%)		Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) Level (%)	
		Part I	Part II	Part I	Part II
1	Remember	37.2	30.2	32.9	31.2
2	Understand	39.7	40.6	44.4	44.3
3	Apply	10.6	10.4	5	3.7
4	Analyse	9.5	16.2	7.8	10.6
5	Evaluate	6.3	4.6	5.3	6.2
6	Create	2.1	5.8	4.4	3.7

Apart from this, the present study has also strived to understand how much the EFL textbooks contribute to develop EFL learners’ critical thinking skills. To this end, the findings of this study has been discussed as follows;

##### 4.2 Remember

The results of this study show that there are overall 25% EFL learners who have high skill and 59% of them have beginning skills regarding the critical thinking skill of “remember” whereas 16% of the EFL learners are unskilled. It means the EFL textbooks develop 84% students’ critical thinking skill of

“remember” and this also shows that majority of the EFL learners can produce the crammed material

successfully and skilfully. Table 4 shows the overall picture of this scenario as follows;

**Table 4: EFL learners’ performance in critical thinking skill of “remember”**

S. No.	Performance Categories	SSC (P-I) (%)	SSC (P-II) (%)	HSSC (P-I) (%)	HSSC (P-II) (%)
1	Unskilled	18.0	18.0	12.0	16.0
2	Beginning Skills	54.0	72.0	76.0	34.0
3	Skilled/High Skilled	28.0	10.0	12.0	50.0

#### 4.3 Understand

So far as the second critical thinking skill of “understand” is concerned, the present study has found out that 66% are unskilled, 21% have beginning skills and overall, 13% of the EFL learners

have high skills. It is also interesting to note no student from SSC Part-I and HSSC Part-II has been able to reach the level of high skilled in the critical thinking skill of “understand”. These results have been shown in the table 5 given as follows;

**Table 5: EFL learners’ performance in critical thinking skill of “understand”**

S. No.	Performance Categories	SSC (P-I) (%)	SSC (P-II) (%)	HSSC (P-I) (%)	HSSC (P-II) (%)
1	Unskilled	66.0	84.0	96.0	18.0
2	Beginning Skills	32.0	16.0	4.0	32.0
3	Skilled/High Skilled	2.0	–	–	50.0

#### 4.4 Apply

The results of the present study show that 73.5% of the EFL learners are unskilled in the critical thinking skill of

“apply” whereas 14% of the students have beginning skills and only 12.5% students have high skills in this regard. These results have been illustrated in the table 6 given as follows;

**Table 6: EFL learners’ performance in critical thinking skill of “apply”**



S. No.	Performance Categories	SSC (P-I) (%)	SSC (P-II) (%)	HSSC (P-I) (%)	HSSC (P-II) (%)
1	Unskilled	70.0	94.0	88.0	42.0
2	Beginning Skills	30.0	4.0	12.0	10.0
3	Skilled/High Skilled	–	2.0	–	48.0

#### 4.5 Analyse

So far as the critical thinking skill of “analyse” is concerned, the results of the study show that overall, 17.5% are skilled in the critical thinking skill of “analyse”. Of the SSC and

HSSC students, 31% have beginning skills and 51.5% are unskilled in analysing the given material in the form of writing. Table 7 illustrates these results.

**Table 7: EFL learners’ performance in critical thinking skill of “analyse”**

S. No.	Performance Categories	SSC (P-I) (%)	SSC (P-II) (%)	HSSC (P-I) (%)	HSSC (P-II) (%)
1	Unskilled	64.0	62.0	42.0	38.0
2	Beginning Skills	30.0	36.0	46.0	12.0
3	Skilled/High Skilled	6.0	2.0	12.0	50.0

#### 4.6 Evaluate

Regarding the critical thinking skill of “evaluate”, the present studies has found out that 42.5% of the EFL learners are unskilled in this skill. On

the other hand, 49% have beginning skills and only 8.5% are skilled in the critical thinking skill of “evaluate”. These results have been presented in table 8 given as follows;

**Table 8: EFL learners’ performance in critical thinking skill of “evaluate”**

S. No.	Performance Categories	SSC (P-I) (%)	SSC (P-II) (%)	HSSC (P-I) (%)	HSSC (P-II) (%)
1	Unskilled	30.0	54.0	40.0	46.0

2	<b>Beginning Skills</b>	64.0	38.0	54.0	40.0
3	<b>Skilled/High Skilled</b>	6.0	8.0	6.0	14.0

#### 4.7 Create

The results of the present study show that 8.5% students are skilled, 44.5% have beginning skills and 47% of

the EFL learners are unskilled in the critical thinking skill of “create”. These results have been presented in table 9 given as follows;

**Table 9: EFL learners’ performance in critical thinking skill of “create”**

S. No.	Performance Categories	SSC (P-I) (%)	SSC (P-II) (%)	HSSC (P-I) (%)	HSSC (P-II) (%)
1	<b>Unskilled</b>	62.0	64.0	34.0	28.0
2	<b>Beginning Skills</b>	36.0	34.0	56.0	52.0
3	<b>Skilled/High Skilled</b>	2.0	2.0	10.0	20.0

#### 5. Discussion

The present study has aimed to know to what extent critical thinking skills are embedded and focused in EFL textbooks at secondary school certificate (SSC) and higher secondary school certificate (HSSC) level, to examine the role of EFL textbooks used in Pakistan in promoting EFL learners’ critical thinking skills and to know, of lower and higher order thinking, which level is better developed through EFL textbooks. To this end, this study has found out that 82.6% of the questions of the EFL textbooks focus on the lower order thinking skills (LOTS) of “remember”, “understand” and “apply”. On the other hand, only 7.5% of the questions of the EFL textbooks target the higher order thinking skills (HOTS) of “analyse”, “evaluate” and “create”. These findings of the present study have

also been seconded by the findings of the study conducted by Wu and Pie (2018) in the context of English majors in Chinese universities reveal that most of the textbooks comprise of knowledge and comprehension questions which are very helpful to understand a text but they make little contribution to the development of EFL learners’ critical thinking these questions. In the same vein, the studies conducted in other EFL contexts have also highlighted the same issue. For instance, the findings of the study conducted by Alul (2001) reveal that EFL textbooks predominantly encourage learners’ lower-level thinking. Likewise, Zareian et al. (2015) have found that EFL textbooks do not tap and harness Iranian EFL learners’ higher-order thinking skills.

The findings of the present study also reveal that the least focused critical

thinking skill in the EFL textbooks is that of “create” whereas “remember” and “understand” are the most focused critical thinking skills. This leads the EFL learners to cramming and rote learning. This is why these learners resort to ready made material in the form of helping books. In this regard, the study has also found out that .....% students have beginning skills and .....% are skilled in the critical thinking skill of “remember” which is a lower-order thinking skill. This study has also found out that as we move from the lower-order thinking skills to higher-order thinking skills, we discover that the percentage of the skilled and beginning skills decreases and that of the unskilled learners increases. For instance, the findings of the present study reveal that there are 25% skilled EFL learners in the critical thinking skill of “remember”, 13% in “understand”, 12.5% in “apply”, 17.5% in “analyse” 8.5% in “evaluate” and 8.5% in critical thinking skill of “create”. This shows that the higher the critical thinking skill is, the lower the EFL learners’ performance and language proficiency in reflecting their critical thinking skills is. The findings of the study conducted by Ulum (2016) also report that the coursebooks fail to make students practice and flourish their cognitive skills of higher level. The findings of the present study have also been seconded by the study conducted by Ahmad and Shah (2014) also reports that the textbooks used to teach Saudi EFL learners fail to develop their language competence and cultivate in them a positive attitude towards the target language and culture. In the same vein, the findings of the study conducted by Pervaiz and Imran (2013) in Iranian context reveal that EFL textbooks mainly focus on the lower-level critical thinking skills of comprehension,

knowledge, building community and application. Another study conducted by Naseem et al. (2015) also second the findings of the present study by maintaining that the EFL textbooks used in Pakistan do not contribute to the development of EFL learners’ critical thinking skills and cognitive abilities of evaluation, analysis and prediction.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study has investigated the role of EFL textbooks in developing critical thinking skills at secondary and higher secondary level in Pakistan. To this end, the present study has found out that the EFL textbooks help develop lower order thinking skills among the SSC and HSSC students. This study has also unearthed the fact that these EFL textbooks remain unable to hone and develop students’ higher order thinking skills because the contents of these books are not used to this end. There is a need to integrate such activities particularly exercise questions as can help the students develop their critical thinking skills.

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