Is Critical Thinking Accomodated in Junior High School English Textbook?

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Abstract. Critical thinking is essential and becomes one of education objectives; however the previous studies showed that students have no it sufficiently since the material particularly textbook used in learning process do not accommodate them to think critically in English class. There is a scarcity of research on investigation of critical thinking elements in junior high school English textbook. Thus, this study explores to what extent English textbook of grade 8, *When English Rings a Bell*, provides the critical thinking elements. This study employed content analysis by addressing a framework developed by Ilyas. His framework consisted of critical thinking activities, task, or questions. The findings suggested that the junior high school English textbook provided a few critical thinking tasks or questions. It was dominated by textually-explicit tasks or questions which do not stimulate students to think critically. The implication of this study is discussed further.

Keywords: Critical thinking · EFL textbook · Ilyas' critical thinking framework

1 Introduction

Critical thinking is essential and one of education objectives [1]. It is also stated clearly as national objective in Indonesia; however it seems not to be paid attention in English language teaching [2]. As consequence, it affects to students' critical thinking which the students have lack of critical thinking. It was corroborated by the previous studies. The deficiency of critical thinking occurs around the world [3]. Stapleton [3] found Hong Kong high school students were not good at critical thinking. Oman EFL undergraduates also required to develop their language and critical thinking [4]. A few of college students in United States had improvement in critical thinking [5]. Espey's finding was similar to Soufi & See [6] that graduate students in United States were not able to construct the written argument. Jager [7] also found the twelfth graders in South Africa did not have critical thinking because they tended to follow the authority and did not want to ask the question. Similarly, Indonesian EFL students' written responses indicated that they did not have adequate critical thinking [2].

One factor contributing to students' critical thinking is the material used during learning process. It was also reported by Soufi & See [6] that the material provided did not trigger the students to think critically. Similarly, Ilyas [2] found that the materials

in the Indonesian English textbooks did not facilitate students' critical thinking. They mostly consisted of textually-explicit questions which the students easily found the answers from the text without stimulating them to think critically.

A few studies examined English textbooks accommodating students' critical thinking in junior high school level in Indonesian context. Previous studies investigated Indonesian English textbooks in senior high school level [2]. Solihati & Hikmat [8] scrutinized Indonesian textbooks in senior high school level. In this respect, it has urgency to conduct the research to explore junior high school Indonesian English textbook representing critical thinking. Thus, the following research question is addressed: To what extent does junior high school English textbook accommodate students' critical thinking?

Ilyas' critical thinking framework is used in this study to analyze the representation of critical thinking in Indonesian English textbook. It was a synthesis of critical thinking tests and taxonomies into a framework containing tasks or questions to build students' critical thinking such as asking students to clarify; express their reason, viewpoint, assumption; show their agreement or disagreement; conclude or summarize their idea or concept; and provide the implication or alternative to find the solution; analyze; and interpret [2].

2 Method

The research method applied to conduct this study was content analysis. It was applicable to analyze text, images, maps, sounds, signs, symbols, etc. [9]. The aim of this study was to explore critical thinking accommodated in Indonesian English textbook. The data source of this study was an Indonesian English textbook entitled *When English Rings a Bell*. The junior high school English textbook published in 2017 was used for eight graders. It was provided by Indonesian government free for students and most public schools used it.

2.1 Research Procedure

This study comprised some steps. Firstly, the analytical category was determined. It referred to Ilyas' framework. Secondly, table analysis constructed using Microsoft Excel consisted of unit, topics, and pages as well analytical category. Thirdly, those categories were coding thematically. The result of analysis was validated by an expert in critical thinking and ELT instruction to build the data credibility and consistency.

2.2 Data Analysis

The data analysis addressed to Ilyas' critical thinking framework [2]. The critical thinking framework consists of tasks or questions encouraging students to think critically. Those were summarized as follows:

1. Clarification tasks or questions ask the students to make their answers clearer. The examples are "What do you mean by staying at home?" and "Can you explain further about it?"

2. Assumption tasks or questions ask what the students assume or encourage them to identify other's assumption, for instance "What are you assuming about your mother's habit?"
3. Reason and evidence tasks or questions ask the students about their reason and evidence. The example is "Could you explain your reasons why everybody must stay at home during pandemic?"
4. Viewpoint or perspective tasks or questions ask the students to express their opinion, viewpoint or perspective about something. The question is "What do you think of online learning?"
5. Implication, consequence or alternative tasks or questions stimulate the students to give the implication or consequence of the problem and encourage them some to provide the solution. One of the examples is "What is the best solution if you wake up late for school?"
6. Prediction tasks or questions trigger the students to make a prediction. The question is "What will probably happen when the heavy rain does not stop?"
7. Agreement and disagreement questions encourage the students to express their agreement or disagreement. The example is "Do you agree if you learn online? Why?"
8. Summary or conclusion questions are addressed to the students to summarize or conclude. The question is "What can you conclude from the passage?"
9. Interpretation and analysis questions are additional analytic categories contributing to students' critical thinking development.

The questions found in the English textbook were analyzed based on aforementioned categories. Then they were coded. Each coding was counted based on the occurrences.

3 Findings and Discussions

This study aims to explore the critical thinking questions or tasks in junior high school English textbook. Table 1 showed that it comprised of thirteen units with different topics. It consisted of materials for two semesters and had 234 pages including the appendixes. As shown in Fig. 1, there were 37 critical thinking tasks or questions (29%) and 91 non-critical thinking tasks or questions (71%). It indicated that junior high school English textbook had not accommodated students' critical thinking since it was more dominated by textually explicit questions. It strengthened Ilyas' findings [2] and Solihati and Hikmat's work suggesting the English and Indonesian textbook were less critical thinking.

The occurrence of critical thinking tasks or questions was less than non-critical thinking task or questions. The critical thinking tasks or questions comprising clarification, assumption, reasons and evidence, implication, consequences and alternative, prediction, agreement and disagreement were not found in the textbook. On the other hand, viewpoints or perspective, interpretation, and analysis tasks or questions emerged in the textbook. As showed in Fig. 1, the interpretation tasks or questions were more dominant (43%) than viewpoints or perspective (38%) and analysis (19%). Those findings were in line with Chou et al. [10] that critical thinking included analyzing, synthesizing,

Table 1. General description of English textbook "When English Rings a Bell"

| Unit	Topic	Pages
1	It's English time	2–18
2	We can do it and we will do it	19–32
3	We know what to do	33–44
4	Come to my birthday, please	45–64
5	I'm so happy for you	65–74
6	Our busy road	75–84
7	My uncle is a zookeeper	85–100
8	What are you doing?	101–118
9	Bigger is not always better	119–140
10	When I was a child	141–166
11	Yes, we made it	167–196
12	Don't forget it, please	197–216
13	We got a lot of histories	217–222
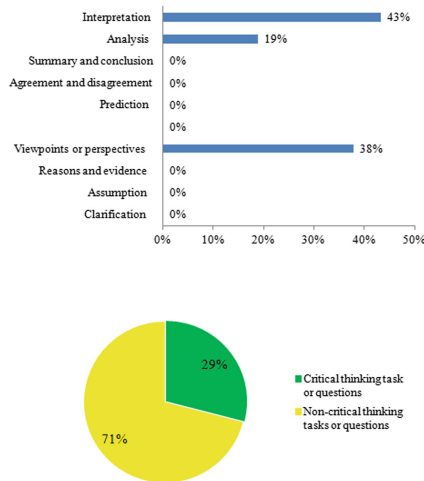
Fig. 1. The occurrence of critical and non-critical thinking tasks or questions

interpreting and evaluating. In similar vein, this study supported Angeli, Valanides, & Bonk's wok [11] that the critical thinking as an attempt to explain the point of view and reason by considering the evidences.

1. Mrs. Harum: "I'm very proud of Siti. Now she can help me with the housework before she goes to school. She can get up early herself."
2. Rani:" Yuli and Tono make fried rice, and they can fry the egg nicely. They can also serve fried rice beautifully with tomatoes and celery."
3. Mr. Adnan:"It is usually not easy to speak English loudly and clearly. But, I'm happy that many of you can do it well. Adi still makes mistakes, but he can read his story loudly."
4. Denata:"Fatima always speaks softly, but when she sings, she can sing very loudly."

1. According to Mrs. Harum:
   a. Siti can help her with the housework before she goes to school.
   b. She can get up early herself.
2. According to Rani:
   a. Yuli can_____
   b. She can_____
   c. She can_____
3. According to Mr.Adnan:
   a. Many students can_____
4. According to Denata:
   a. Fatma can_____

Fig. 2. Non-critical thinking tasks or questions. Adapted from *Bahasa Inggris* "When English rings a bell"

The non-critical thinking tasks or questions that mostly were textually-explicit questions emerged in the textbook. In the textbook, unit 2 pages 23–24 provided reading task which students read short passage and they were asked to complete the blank. All answers were stated clearly in the text (See Fig. 2) which the tasks or questions did not support critical thinking. To develop students' critical thinking was required to pose beyond textually-explicit questions which were called textually-implicit questions encouraging the students to evaluate the text to obtain the answer [2]. However, this study indicated that the textually-implicit questions were rare in this study. They were contradictive to Defianty & Wilson [12]. The provocative and deep questions had potential to build students' critical thinking since it could establish the way to solve the problem based on the logical and rational arguments and take reasonable decision [13] and analyze, evaluate and interpret sources or activities [14].

The interpretation tasks or questions had higher frequency than other critical thinking questions (43%). In unit 6 page 83, the students were asked to interpret a statement and find a song lyric reflecting it. For instance, the statement was "The writer believes that love is the heart of every person". The song lyrics reflecting it were "There's a place in your heart and I know that it is love. There's love that cannot lie." It was shown in Fig. 3.
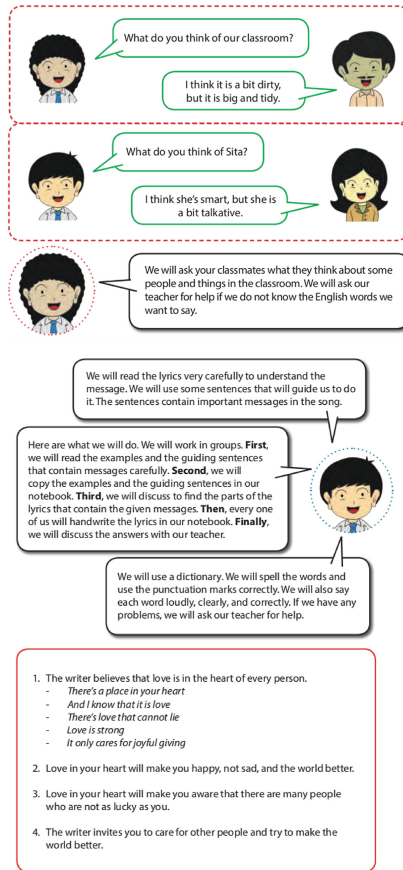
Fig. 3. Viewpoint and analysis tasks or questions. Adapted from *Bahasa Inggris* "When English rings a bell"

The viewpoint or perspective (38%) and analysis tasks or questions (19%) were less than interpretation. The students were asked to express their opinion, viewpoint of perspective. In unit 1 page 12, they were asked to explain their opinion about people and things in the classroom. They were also asked to make an analysis on capital letter and punctuation. They revised inappropriate capital letter and punctuation as shown in unit 12 page 201–202 (Fig. 4).

The finding showed that interpretation, analysis and viewpoints or perspective tasks or questions emerged in the textbook. Conversely, the task or questions of clarification, assumption, reasons and evidence, implication, consequences and alternative, prediction, agreement and disagreement were not found. It indicated that the materials to develop students' critical thinking were not varied. The variation of materials including the activities, tasks, or exercises was essential since it could challenge students to learn particularly to develop their critical thinking [15].
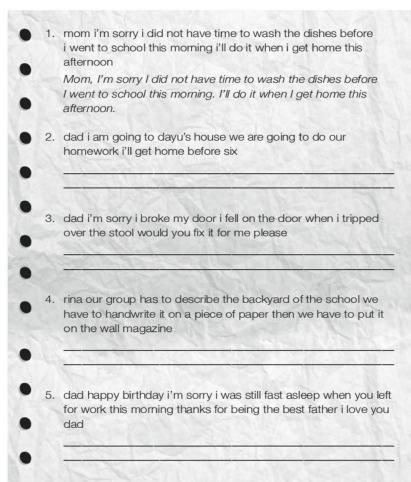
1. mom i'm sorry i did not have time to wash the dishes before i went to school this morning i'll do it when i get home this afternoon

   Mom, I'm sorry I did not have time to wash the dishes before I went to school this morning. I'll do it when I get home this afternoon.

2. dad i am going to dayu's house we are going to do our homework i'll get home before six

3. dad i'm sorry i broke my door i fell on the door when i tripped over the stool would you fix it for me please

4. rina our group has to describe the backyard of the school we have to handwrite it on a piece of paper then we have to put it on the wall magazine

5. dad happy birthday i'm sorry i was still fast asleep when you left for work this morning thanks for being the best father i love you dad

Fig. 4. Interpretation tasks or questions. Adapted from *Bahasa Inggris* "When English rings a bell"

4   Conclusion

This study examines the critical thinking tasks or questions in junior high school English textbook but the number is limited. On the other hand, the numbers of non-critical thinking tasks or questions have high occurrence which they are dominated by textually-explicit questions which do not accommodate students to think critically since they students are easy to obtain the answer from the text without analyzing, evaluating, interpreting, concluding, or making a rational decision.

This study contributes to the textbook writers to enrich more critical thinking tasks or questions to cultivate and develop students' critical thinking. They should cover all Ilyas' critical thinking framework such as clarification, assumption, reasons and evidence, implication, consequences and alternative, prediction, agreement, viewpoint or perspective, interpretation, and analysis. The teachers are also advocated to use the materials stimulating their students' critical thinking by applying the critical thinking framework.

The limitation of this study was found. Firstly, the data source is only one book provided by government. Secondly, the book analyzed is for grade 8. Further studies are required to conduct. The data source should be varied. The further study analyzes not only the book provided government but also other English textbooks. The textbook analyzed should be for various levels such as grade 7 and 9 of junior high school level as well primary school level.

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