

Critical Thinking Skills Included in the Second Secondary Grade English Language Textbook in Jordan

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Abstract

The current study aimed to determine the critical thinking skills that should be available in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade in Jordan, and to assess the degree of their availability in the textbook itself. The analytical descriptive approach was used. A content analysis card was the study instrument. Moreover, the validity and reliability of the instrument were confirmed. In addition, the results of the study revealed that the degree of availability of critical thinking skills in the English language textbook of the second secondary grade was unequal in terms of frequencies, percentages, and rank. The skill of interpretation came in the first place, followed by the skill of evaluation, the skill of inference, the skill of analysis, and the skill of imagination in the fifth place. Finally, the study recommended reconsidering the English language curriculum and enriching the English textbook for the second secondary grade with critical thinking skills, especially the skills of analysis and imagination.

Keywords: Curriculum, Critical thinking skills, English language, Content analysis.

1. Introduction

The immensity of ideas caused by the information revolution that we live in the 21st century called for the need to rely on a logical scientific approach based on rational and critical thinking skills. This issue has received much attention from educators and researchers who concentrate on helping students to acquire multiple thinking skills. Thinking is a skilled work that needs knowledge, practice, and diligence to make the right decisions.

The concept of textbook content analysis has been widely used in the field of education. It is considered a systematic scientific tool, used as a method for developing and improving the curriculum based on the results of analyzing the content of textbooks objectively and systematically by converting written material into measurable numerical data to reveal the most prominent strengths and weaknesses in school curricula (Muhammad & Abdel-Azim, 2018).

Paul (as cited in Al Syouf, 2022) states that shaping minds and making them critically logical has always been the most crucial goal of education; the quality of one's thinking affects the quality of one's life. Moreover, preparing the learner for the future should be teach him how to think rather than what to think as indicated.

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There are several types of thinking: abstract thinking, creative thinking, reflective thinking, clairvoyance, lateral thinking, cognitive thinking, deductive thinking, vertical thinking, and critical thinking. Al-Rahbi et al. (2022) argue that as people nowadays face vast amounts of information worldwide. There is a need for developing critical thinkers who can evaluate information, analyze data, assess resources, and make informed decisions has become a necessity. There is a strong agreement across all disciplines that critical thinking is essential in any current educational system.

Al-Shenikat (2022) defined critical thinking as: a cognitive mental activity that includes several sub-skills; it works on an objective and accurate analysis of any belief or claim according to specific criteria to judge the validity of its acceptance or rejection.

Many scholars stress the importance of including critical thinking skills in students' textbooks. Meanwhile, Zhang (2022) illustrates that critical thinking skills make the textbook more meaningful for learners. Moreover, teachers should encourage them and become a habit among students.

Textbooks contain educational material that helps achieve the objectives of the envisaged curriculum. The need to teach thinking skills through the content of the study material causes a gradual growth in thinking skills due to engaging students to think about the academic content. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that textbooks develop multiple thinking skills among students, especially critical thinking skills (Al Syouf, 2022).

English Language textbooks play a vital role in the teaching-learning process. Textbooks provide resources to instructors and learners and provide information and knowledge for learners (Srivastava, 2017; Richards, 2001; Keshta, 2000).

English language is considered one of the basic subjects for the educational grades as students in Jordan learn English as a foreign language starting from the first grade and continue to learn it until the twelfth grade because of its prominent and important role in refining their critical thinking skills.

As indicated in Nairoukh's (2022) study, secondary education is considered a link of evident importance in the series of educational stages because it occupies a position within the educational system as it is regarded as a middle stage between the stage of primary education and university education (in the academic ladder), which made it a distinct stage of the stages of learners' growth, which is the stage of adolescence, so it falls on its basic consequences.

Therefore, it is required to meet the needs of learners in the most fertile period of their lives. At the same time, it is necessary to meet the needs of society as it plays a balanced educational, social, and cultural role. Its importance lies in the fact that it is a connecting and ending stage at the same time, as it is a stage that leads to university studies on the one hand, and on the other hand, it ends when the secondary school certificate exam fails.

From this standpoint, the Ministry of Education confirmed that the English language curriculum for the second secondary grade should include critical thinking skills. Therefore, this study seeks to verify the availability of critical thinking skills in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade as these skills are of great importance to students.

2. Statement of the Problem

Critical thinking has been widely acclaimed as an essential educational outcome, but many difficulties still need to be solved concerning how to deal with it (Forte & Horvath, 2011). Though some studies have dealt with the analysis of critical thinking skills included in textbooks for various subjects, there is a need for studies that have attempted

to reveal the availability of critical thinking skills in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade in Jordan. In the content of English language textbooks, priority should have been given to including critical thinking skills in the content of these textbooks. The results of most studies confirmed its availability, but to varying and insufficient degrees.

Since critical thinking is not innate skill that can be learned through practice and self-reflection, textbooks are the most effective instrument to teach students critical thinking skills. It is worth mentioning here that the follow-up, development, and evaluation processes for the "Action Pack" series for high school classes stopped a decade ago, and logic dictates the inevitability of progress and the need to align the content of textbooks with the requirements of human upbringing and in line with the skills of the 21st century. Consequently, the researcher needed to analyze the content of the English language textbook for the second secondary grade to determine the principal and sub-critical thinking skills that should be available in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade in Jordan and reveal the degree of their availability in the textbook itself.

3. Significance of the Study

The importance of this study stems from the following points: First, the current study might benefit graduate students and researchers as it will provide a list of main and subsidiary critical thinking skills through content analysis and the possibility of using them in other educational research similar to the topic of the current study. Second, the current study might provide valuable feedback to textbook writers, curricula developers, educational decision-makers, and English language supervisors. Third, it is hoped that the results of the current study will provide worthwhile information to teachers of English Language of the second secondary grade, about the nature of critical thinking skills available in its content. Fourth, the results of this study might be helpful for students to think consciously, develop critical thinking skills, and concentrate on meaningful learning.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to analyze the content of the second-secondary grade Jordanian English language textbook to reveal the Critical thinking skills that should be available in the English language textbook for the second-secondary grade. It attempts to show the critical thinking skills included in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade.

5. Questions of the Study

This study addressed the two following research questions:

- 1) What critical thinking skills should be available in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade?
- 2) What critical thinking skills are included in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade?

6. Limitations of the Study

The generalizability of the study results was limited to analyzing the content of the English language textbook for the second secondary grade in Jordan quantitatively and qualitatively. The units of analysis were the following: sentence, paragraph, and picture,

with the exclusion of the word unit, to identify critical thinking skills (interpretation, inference, analysis, imagination, and evaluation) included in the English language textbook "Action Pack 12" in its two parts (Student's Book & Activity Book) for the second secondary grade of edition (2015) in its first and second semesters, which was approved by the decision of the Council of Education in its session No. (2/2015) on 20/05/2015) starting from the academic year 2015/2016.

7. Literature Review

Analyzing school curricula has become a priority in educational and learning science in light of the current scientific and informatics development. Developing curricula has become a focus of attention by many researchers and educators. To keep pace with this amount of knowledge, which increased the importance of studies of analyzing textbooks and foresight on their foundations and making them not limited to teaching foresight skills but instead goes beyond them to the necessity of designing school contents that are characterized by a comprehensive and clear vision. It works on developing human resources, increasing production, developing research and discipline skills, urging critical thinking, and finding solutions to problems (Fayyoumi, 2022). Liets & Pules (as cited in Muhammad & Abdel-Azim, 2018), believe that content analysis or content is informed by the research method that includes:

The interest in critical thinking dates back to the era of Socrates in the fifth century BC, but the interest of educators in critical thinking began with the work of John Dewey during the period (1910-1939 AD) when he used in his book (How We Think) terms of the type of reflective thinking and questioning that is adopted in his scientific method, then Edward Glaser and others came and gave broader meaning to the terms critical thinking by developing tests that measure this thinking in the period (1940-1961 AD).

Critical thinking is one of the most fundamental skills in the twenty-first century which has become difficult for any individual to ignore as it helps him to deal with his life situations and problems that he may go through. Our society today is dominated by much contradictory information, caused by the rapid changes and the tremendous technical and scientific innovations in an era characterized as the "age of information technology".

Despite the importance of critical thinking, achieving it takes work. For example, educational institutions of all types and departments that are not limited, starting from early childhood education to university level and higher education; should follow a clear and consistent policy; its main objective is to encourage creativity and innovation, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills to produce productive, thinking individuals who are capable of social communication, deep thinking and the use of technology, as mentioned in Enrichment Guide for 21st Century Skills Activities in its first edition in the year 2021/2022 (Ministry of Education, 2022).

The concept of critical thinking was investigated over two consecutive years, starting from (1990-1992), by a group of researchers, experts, and academics interested in critical thinking, consisting of (46) experts from different academic fields: such as social sciences, humanities, natural sciences, and the field of education, at the invitation of the American Psychological Association (APA) (Facione, 1998).

According to Yuan et al. (2022) it is the ability to verify assumptions and ideas using various inferences and probability estimates to judge whether they are likely true or false. As was defined by Amy Show et al. (2020) it is critical a generic skill that aids in academic and career success in the 21st century with the increasing demands of the modern workplace and global trends.

Critical thinking is very important. It helps students to monitor and control their thinking. It also makes their ideas more accurate and correct, and critical thinking allows students to link causes with their causes and raises students' mental activity, which helps them reach a degree of mastery, and enables them to acquire multiple skills, such as: interpretation, inference, analysis, imagination, and evaluation. The importance of critical thinking lies in including these main skills in school curricula in general and the English language curriculum in particular.

There are many classifications of critical thinking skills due to the multiplicity of its definitions and theoretical frameworks that explain it, and the most famous and vital of these classifications is Facione's classification. According to the updated statement of the National of Experts, critical thinking consists of the following core skills (Facione, 2020).

Interpretation is "to comprehend and express the meaning or significance of a wide variety of experiences, situations, data, events, judgments, conventions, beliefs, rules, procedures, or criteria." Analysis is "to identify the intended and actual inferential relationships among statements, questions, concepts, descriptions, or other forms of representation intended to express belief, judgment, experiences, rezones, information, or opinions." Experts define evaluation as meaning "to assess the credibility of statements or other representations which are accounts or descriptions of a person's perception, experience, situation, judgment, belief, or opinion; and to assess the logical strength of the actual or intended inferential relationships among statements, descriptions, questions or other forms of representation." Inference means "to identify and secure elements needed to draw reasonable conclusions; to form conjectures and hypotheses; to consider relevant information and to reduce the consequences flowing from data, statements, principles, evidence, judgments, beliefs, opinions, concepts, descriptions, questions, or other forms of representation." Experts define explanation as being able to present in a cogent and coherent way the results of one's reasoning. This means to be able to give someone a full look at the big picture: both "to state and to justify that reasoning in terms of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, and contextual considerations upon which one's results were based; and to present one's reasoning in the form of cogent arguments." Self-regulation means "self-consciously to monitor one's cognitive activities, the elements used in those activities, and the results educed, particularly by applying skills in analysis, and evaluation to one's own inferential judgments with a view toward questioning, confirming, validating, or correcting either one's reasoning or one's results." Figure (1): shows the core critical thinking skills.

Figure (1): Core of Critical Thinking skills



8. Research Method

A. Participants

The study sample consisted of the English language textbook "Action Pack 12" in its two parts (Student's Book & Activity Book) for the second secondary grade in the first and second semesters taught in Jordan during the academic year 2022/2023. The total number of textbook units was (10) units: (5) units for the first semester and (5) units for the second semester as in Table (1).

TABLE 1 The Sample Distribution

Unit No.	Unit Title	Semester
1	Information technology	First
2	A healthy life	
3	Medical advances	
4	Success stories	
5	The arts	
6	Education today	Second
7	Lifelong learning	
8	Language	
9	The world of business	
10	Career choices	

B. Design of the Study

The units of analysis used in the current study, were the sentence, the paragraph, and the picture to extract critical thinking skills in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade.

C. Instrument of the Study

A content analysis card is designed to identify the main skills and sub-skills for analyzing the content of an English language textbook. Based on all the previous sources, the researcher designed a list of critical thinking skills that consisted in its initial form, of (5) main skills and (27) sub-skills. The sub-skills were reduced to (20) by the suggestions and comments of the jury of judges. Therefore, the main critical thinking skills were analyzed for their sub-skills, which consisted of (20) sub-skills distributed among five main skills, as in Table (2).

TABLE 2 Distribution the Paragraphs of the Critical Thinking Skills Analysis Card According to its Five Domains

Critical thinking skills	Number of items
Interpretation Skill	4
Inference Skill	4
Analysis Skill	4
Imagination Skill	4
Evaluation Skill	4

Total

20

E. Analysis Units

The units of analysis used in the current study, were the sentence, the paragraph, and the picture to extract critical thinking skills in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade. To achieve the validity of the content analysis card and its items, it has been evaluated by a jury of judges consisting of (20) juries, well-experienced qualified faculty staff members from different Jordanian and Arab universities in the fields of methodology, applied linguistics, educational technology, and measurement and evaluation in addition to English supervisor in the Ministry of Education.

The different analysts' methods confirmed the stability of the analysis card. The researcher conducted a content analysis of one randomly selected study unit, which the fourth unit, "Success Stories". Then another English language teacher who holds a master's degree in curricula and teaching methods and had previously carried out an analysis of the English language textbook for the second secondary grade, and her years of experience are similar to the number of years of experience of the researcher. Agreeing on the method of analysis, the analysis was carried out in the light of the specific analysis categories, and depending on the units of analysis that included the paragraph, the sentence, and the picture, where the agreement coefficient was extracted according to the following (Holisti) equation.

E. Procedures

To achieve the aim, of the study the following methodological procedures were followed:

- Identify the problem of this study and its sample.
- Examine carefully the English language textbook for the second secondary grade.
- Obtain official approvals for the implementation of the study where the researcher visited the Department of Curricula and Textbooks of the Ministry of Education to gain more insight into the critical thinking skills that should be included in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade, and has reviewed "Book of General Guidelines and General Specific Outcomes for the English Language Curriculum for the basic and Secondary Stages" in addition to "Enrichment Guide for Twenty-First-Century Skills".
- Review and analyze theoretical literature, including research and literature on the subject of the current study to benefit from it.
- Build the study instrument and ascertain its psychometric properties.
- Identify text parts as units of analysis; sentence, paragraph, and picture.
- Analyze the content of the English language textbook for the second secondary grade in Jordan, according to the specified model, and in the light of the critical thinking skills that have been adopted after ensuring the validity and reliability of the analysis instrument.
- Carry out appropriate statistical analysis, extract results, discuss the results then draw conclusions and recommendations.
- Process the analysis results statistically using frequencies and percentages and interpreting them. After that, using the (Holisti) equation to calculate the stability coefficient.
- Present the results of the study in the fourth chapter.
- Discuss the results in the fifth chapter.

- Present recommendations and suggestions in light of the results of the study.

9. Results

The results of answering the study questions that attempted to reach the critical thinking skills that should be available in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade in Jordan were presented in addition to revealing the critical thinking skills included in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade in Jordan. The following is a presentation of the results according to the sequence of study questions:

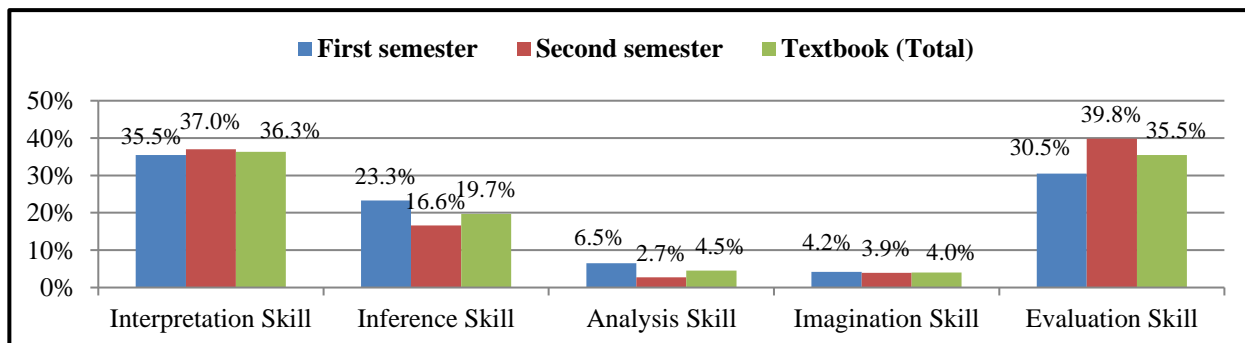
Results related to the first question: What critical thinking skills should be available in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade? To answer this question, a list of the most important critical thinking skills that should be available in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade in Jordan was prepared, after referring to “General Guidelines and General Specific Outcomes for the English Language Curriculum for the Basic and Secondary Stages”, theoretical literature and many relevant previous studies

Results related to the second question: What critical thinking skills are included in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade? The content of the English language textbook for the second secondary grade in Jordan for the first and second semesters was analyzed in light of the critical thinking skills contained in the analysis card where the frequencies, percentages, and rank were initially calculated for the sub-skills in each of the five main skills, and then for the five skills in general. The results of including the main critical thinking skills in the five domains in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade are shown in Table (3).

Table (3) Frequencies, Percentages, and Rank for the Five Critical Thinking Skills Included in the English Language Textbook for the Second Secondary Grade

Critical Thinking Skills	First semester			Second semester			Textbook (Total)		
	Freq.	%	Rank	Freq.	%	Rank	Freq.	%	Rank
Interpretation Skill	451	35.5%	1	542	37%	2	993	36.6%	1
Inference Skill	296	23.3%	3	243	16.6%	3	539	19.7%	3
Analysis Skill	83	6.5%	4	40	2.7%	5	123	4.5%	4
Imagination Skill	54	4.2%	5	57	3.9%	4	111	4.0%	5
Evaluation Skill	388	30.5%	2	583	39.8%	1	971	35.5%	2
Total	1272	100%	--	1465	100%	--	2737	100%	--

Figure (2) Percentages of the Five Critical Thinking Skills Included in the English Language Textbook for Second Secondary Grade



It is apparent from Table (3) that the total number of repetitions of critical thinking skills in general included in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade (total) amounted to (2737) repetitions, of which (1272) repetitions were mentioned in the first semester of the textbook, and (1465) repetitions were mentioned in the second semester.

The results also indicated in Table (3) and Figure (2) that the most critical thinking skills included in the textbook as a whole is (Interpretation Skill) and got (993) iterations, with a rate of (36.3%) of the total iterations. This was followed by (Evaluation Skill) with (971) repetitions, at a rate of (35.5%) of the total repetitions, followed by (Inference Skill) with (539) repetitions, at a rate of (19.7%) of the total repetitions, then (Analysis Skill), which got (123) repetitions. With a rate of (4.5%) of the total repetitions, and finally came (Imagination Skill), which obtained (111) repetitions, with a rate of (4%) of the total repetitions.

In the first semester, the most critical thinking skills included in the textbook the English Lapse for the second secondary grade were (Interpretation Skill), and it got (451) repetitions, with a rate of (35.5%) of the total repetitions. This was followed by (Evaluation Skill) with (388) repetitions, at a rate of (30.5%) of the total repetitions, followed by (Inference Skill) with (296) repetitions, at a rate of (23.3%) of the total repetitions, then (Analysis Skill), which got (83) repetitions. At a rate of (6.5%) of the total repetitions, and finally came (Imagination Skill), which obtained (54) repetitions, at a rate of (4.2%) of the total repetitions.

However, the most important critical thinking skills included in the second semester textbook were (Evaluation Skill) which obtained (583) iterations with a rate of (39.8%) of the total iterations. This was followed by (Interpretation Skill) with (542) repetitions, with a rate of (37%) of the total repetitions, followed by (Inference Skill) with (243) repetitions, with a rate of (16.6%) of the total repetitions, then (Imagination Skill), which got (57) repetitions. At a rate of (3.9%) of the total iterations, and finally came (Analysis Skill) and obtained (40) iterations, at a rate of (2.7%) of the total iterations.

10. Discussion

Discussion and conclusion of the results of the first question which states

“What critical thinking skills should be available in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade?”

A list of the most important critical thinking skills that must be available in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade in Jordan was prepared, by referring to “General Guidelines and General Specific Outcomes for the English Language Curriculum for the Basic and Secondary Stages”, educational literature, many previous studies, references and sources related to the subject of the study: Luckily, the finding was approved by the committee of validation of the study instrument

The primary critical thinking skills that should be included in the second-secondary grade's English language textbook are interpretation, inference, analysis, imagination, and evaluation. These skills are appropriate to the age and developmental characteristics of secondary-stage students and the content and topics of the English language subject

Discussion of the results of the second question, which states "What critical thinking skills are included in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade?"

The results of the study revealed that the total number of repetitions of critical thinking skills in general included in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade (total) amounted to (2737) repetitions; interpretation skill came in the first rank and got (993) iterations with a rate of (36.3%) of the total iterations, with a "high" degree.

In fact, this result indicated that the skill of interpretation is one of the most important skills of critical thinking as it represents the ability to clarify a problem or task and analyze it in a simplified manner to make it easier to understand. This result may also be attributed to the focus of the English language curricula writers on the skill of interpretation to bring the content closer to students' minds and clarify it. The interpretation skill falls within the understanding level in Bloom's hierarchy of cognitive levels. This indicates the ample space that interpretation must have and that it is the basis on which other skills are built. For this reason, it was noticed that the skill of performance and its sub-skills, such as defining concepts, categorizing information, organizing tasks clearly, and connecting between topics, all came with high rates in the English textbook for the second secondary grade in Jordan.

The evaluation skill took the second rank. It got (971) iterations, with a rate of (35.5%) of the total iterations with a "high" degree, where the tenth unit, "Career Choices," obtained the highest total repetitions. Inference skill took the third rank. It got (539) occurrences with a rate of (19.7%) of the total occurrences with a "Moderate" degree. The eighth unit, "Language," obtained the highest total repetitions. This result may indicate that the content of the English language textbook for the second secondary grade helped student to draw conclusions based on relevant data. However, it did not support the student in practicing the skill of illustrating cause-effect relationships; this sub-skill came with a very low degree with a rate (2.4%).

The inference skill took the third rank. It got (539) iteration, with a rate of (19.7%) of the total iterations with a "Moderate" degree. The eighth unit of "Language" obtained the highest total repetitions. This result may indicate that the content of the English language textbook for the second secondary grade helped student to draw conclusions based on relevant data. However, it did not help the student to practice the skill of illustrating cause-effect relationships; this sub-skill came with a very low degree with a rate (2.4%).

The analysis skill took the fourth rank. Its skill came in fourth place. It got (123) iterations with a rate of (4.5%) of the total iterations with a "Low" degree. The third unit, "Medical Advances," obtained the highest total repetitions and got (24) iterations at a rate of (.9%). This result might imply that analysis skills are needed to identify underlying conclusions using inference indicators, identify reasons supporting the conclusion, extract the main idea from the text, and compare and contrast activities.

Finally, imagination skill took fifth place. It got (111) iterations with a rate of (4%) of the total iterations, with a "Low" degree. In the contexts in which the imagining skill was mentioned, the context of (picture) was the most frequent context in which this skill appeared with (105) repetitions at a rate of (3.8%), followed by the context of (paragraph) with (6) repetitions at a rate of (0.2%). At the same time, the textbook did not include the skill of imagination in the context of (sentence).

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of the study revealed that there was a difference in the degrees of availability of critical thinking skills in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade. The results showed a clear decline in the availability of the two skills of analysis and imagination, which were available to a very low degree. Moreover, the results of the study indicated that the skills of interpretation and evaluation were available to a higher degree than the skill of inference, which was available, but to a moderate degree, in the textbook. Finally, the results of the study revealed that critical thinking skills (interpretation, inference, analysis, imagination, evaluation) were available in different and unequal degrees in the English language textbook for the second secondary grade. Therefore, it is recommended to revise and update the current English language textbooks is urgent to cope with the recent developments in education. Therefore, critical

thinking skills should be emphasized. Second, carrying out training courses for teachers of English on how to deal with critical thinking skills in teaching and evaluation of students' performance is needed. Third, conducting more studies on critical thinking skills is highly recommended. Fourth, replicating this study on another English language textbook is recommended to confirm the results of this study.

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