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A Modified Version of Bloom's Taxonomy and Critical Language Awareness: Evaluating EAL Textbooks for Junior High Schools in Ghana Through a Critical Literacy Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study set out to evaluate three English as an additional language (EAL) textbooks used by junior high schools in the Ho West District of Ghana. It adopted a critical literacy framing and employed purposive sampling to select five junior high schools in the Ho West District. It utilised a modified version of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of cognitive dimensions and Cummins' (1999) CALP, respectively, to evaluate the language contents of the three EFA textbooks: *Book 1*, *Book 2*, and *Book 3*. The three evaluated areas were: thinking skills; integration of various school subjects; and critical language awareness. Two of the findings of this study are worth mentioning. First, of the six cognitive dimensions of a modified version of Bloom's taxonomy that are graded in degrees of cognitive complexity (e.g., from lower-order thinking skills to higher-order thinking skills), knowledge, as the first lower-order cognitive skill, was the most foregrounded in all the three textbooks. It was followed by understanding as the second lower-order cognitive skill. Second, all the three textbooks incorporated elements of other school subjects in their language contents in line with CALP. By contrast, all the three textbooks did not foster or develop critical language awareness. Overall, the three textbooks foregrounded lower-order thinking skills over higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, inventive thinking (synthesis), and evaluation.

Key words: Modified Version of Bloom's Taxonomy, English as an Additional Language, Textbooks, Junior High Schools, Critical Language Awareness, Critical Literacy

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALIZING ISSUES

The crucial role played by textbooks in learning English as an additional language (EAL) at a school level, particularly in many post-colonies (former British colonies) cannot be over-emphasised. This is a truism that is acknowledged by scholars such as Behnke (2018), Essuman and Osei-Poku (2015), Miekley (2005), Mohammadi and Abdi (2014), Ndura (2004), Opoku-Amankwa et al. (2011), Rahimpour and Hashemi (2011), Roohani and Heidari (2012), Stern and Roseman (2004), Tok (2010), and Wuttisrisiriporn and Usaha (2019). For instance, Tok (2010, p. 509) points out that textbooks 'provide a framework for teachers in achieving the aims and objectives of the course' and 'also serve as a guide to the teacher when conducting lessons.' Similarly, Wuttisrisiriporn and Usaha (2019, p. 46) maintain that 'in language teaching and learning, a textbook is one of the key resources/materials that helps language teachers and learners to achieve particular teaching and learning outcomes.' This pivotal role played by EAL textbooks is also evident in a country such as Ghana, where English is both an official language for the country and a medium of instruction in schools.

In the case of Ghana, in particular, the role played by textbooks in the teaching and learning of EAL at a school level has not been critiqued, problematized, or interrogated by much research. Nor is there enough research that focuses on and explores the use of EAL textbooks prescribed for schools from a critical literacy perspective. Of course, studies investigating the role played by EAL textbooks at schools in Ghana have been conducted (see for example, Akowuah et al., 2018; Essuman & Osei-Poku, 2015; Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2011). However, none of these studies has critiqued, problematized, or interrogated such textbooks; neither are there studies that have employed a critical literacy approach to investigate the role played by such textbooks.

Based on the foregoing points, the current study sought to fill the gap highlighted above. It did so by employing a critical literacy approach to evaluate EAL textbooks in five junior high schools in Ghana. It had the following goals: (a) to investigate the extent to which EAL textbooks cater for a modified version of Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive learning dimensions; (b to examine the extent to which the academic content of these textbooks has elements of other school subjects; and (c) to evaluate the degree to which these textbooks

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help develop critical language awareness as a feature of critical literacy in Cummins' CALP.

In recent times, there has been an increasing number of junior high school (JHS) learners who, after completing their basic education, are unable to read and write properly in English in most Ghanaian junior high schools. Many learners pursuing basic education in primary schools through to JHSs require English proficiency to succeed in their academic work. Therefore, JHS content subject teachers expect learners to possess requisite English proficiency for them to be able to perform well in content subjects.

The poor results of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), which is an exit examination for junior high school learners, as well as the observations made by Chief Examiners of the West Africa Examinations Council (WAEC) (see West African Examinations Council, 2015) suggest that the academic language proficiency of most JHS learners may not be adequately developing as well as expected. This necessitates investigating prescribed textbooks for the EAL curriculum for junior high schools in Ghana. The poor performance of JHS learners in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) in Ghana is not peculiar to the schools in the Ho West District. There have been growing general concerns across Ghana that many learners perform poorly and cannot read and write properly in English by the end of their JHS career (see Abdallah et al., 2014; Ghanney & Aniagyei, 2014; Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2010; Tahiru, 2015; Yeboah, 2014). For example, Ghanney and Aniagyei (2014) point out that notwithstanding that there are professional teachers in Ghanaian public schools, 36% of junior high schools scored a zero percent mark in the 2010 BECE in the Ashanti Region. Similarly, Yeboah's (2014) study that investigated the Sunyani Municipality's learners' low performance in English in BECE attributed this low performance to reading difficulty. In another instance, Tahiru (2015) notes that every time JHS learners perform badly in the Upper West Region, the concerned stakeholders (e.g., education authorities, teachers, and parents) tend to shift the blame from one another in the same way as musical chairs do.

FRAMING LITERACY

Holme (2004) describes the word *literacy* as very elusive because of some of the general definitions which, for instance, imply that literacy 'refers to the practice of reading and writing' (p. 1). Other definitions are more concerned about the adjective *literate* and, therefore, view literacy as 'the ability to read and write' or 'the knowledge of reading and writing' (p. 1). Against this background, one fundamental feature of the meaning of literacy is its association with the knowledge of the basic skills of reading and writing (Gustafsson, 2011; Holme, 2004; Lea, 2004; Lea & Street, 1998; Street, 1984). This view of literacy, the paper argues, is still prevalent and dominant in many areas of the JHS sector of Ghana.

In contrast, there are three cognate views of literacy: literacy as a social practice; multiliteracies; and critical literacy. What unifies these views is their collective focus on social and cultural instances in which literacy occurs and is practised, and on power relations permeating such social and cultural contexts. Owing to these three foci, some scholars suggest that these literacy perspectives can be regarded as critical sociocultural perspectives because of the influence that critical theories tend to have on them (Perry, 2012; also see Lewis et al., 2007; Street, 2003). The view of literacy as a social practice is informed mainly by Street's (1984, 2003) two contrasting conceptions of literacy as an autonomous model and of literacy as an ideological model. The first conception embodies literacy purely in its technical sense: literacy as a set of neutral, objective, and self-containing skills that are applicable to different contexts. Conversely, the ideological model frames literacy as practices embedded in and influenced by real-world contexts with their attendant cultural, social, and power matrices (Perry, 2012; also see Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; Janks, 2014; Ko, 2013). This ideological model marks a shift from a functional view of literacy whose sole focus is on mastering linguistic skills (Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; Ko, 2013).

A multiliteracies view of literacy originates from the New London Group and stresses real-world aspects and issues related to power dynamics and their impact on literacy practices and on literacy learning. This view recognises multiple communication media, linguistic and cultural plurality. Importantly, it foregrounds multimodality as opposed to a sole focus on print literacy as is the case with the view of literacy as a social practice (Perry, 2012). In this sense, this view embodies the notion of digital literacies related to emerging technologies and platforms (Chaka, 2019; Godwin-Jones, 2010; Holme, 2004; Pahl & Rowell, 2012; Tusting, 2013). The third view of literacy, critical literacy, embraces power and empowerment, and identity and agency. It is a view that is grounded on critical pedagogies (Perry, 2012; also see Chaka, 2009; Freire, 1970; Lewis et al. 2007; Mayo, 1995).

To this end, the current paper aligns itself with a critical literacy view and supports an ideological model of literacy and a multiliteracies view. Its version of critical literacy is informed by both critical theories and critical pedagogies. Critical theories derive from and are based on the German Frankfurt School. Even though they may have different permutations, but their rallying point is their critique of various forms of hegemony characterizing different spheres of society, of which dominant ideologies are but one example (Cherryholmes, 1988; Habermas, 1984; Hoy & McCarthy, 1994; Makgato et al., 2015; McCarthy, 1978; Poster, 1989; Thompson, 1984). Such theories include those that critique critical theory itself (see for example, Bassey, 2007; Makgato et al., 2015; Rabaka, 2009). Similarly, critical pedagogies draw on critical theory even though they have a specific orientation to critical education (Giroux, 1983, 1992; Mayo, 1995; Shor, 1999) or a specific orientation to critical literacy (Freire, 1970; Gee, 1996; Janks, 2014; Ko, 2013; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993; Mayo, 1995; Pahl & Rowsell, 2011; Wood & Jocius, 2013). In this sense, the current paper recognizes that critical literacy is informed and determined by situational issues related to a given English language teaching and learning context.

But overall, it contends that critical literacy must be driven by a continuing desire to:

- explore issues from multiple perspectives;
- challenge common sense assumptions and values;
- encourage learners to read beyond the written word, or to read and interpret texts from a resistant perspective and with a questioning mind; and
- implore learners to produce counter narratives or counter texts (see Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004).

However, the development of a critical mind in learners should not result in rational questioning for itself own sake, or in what Pennycook (2001, p. 329) refers to as 'liberal ostrichism', which is a detached objectivity (also see Ko, 2013). Rather, it should be embedded in learners' own socio-cultural circumstances and in their lived experiences.

Moreover, the present paper contends that of the three literacy views delineated above, the autonomous model of literacy is the one that informs EAL textbooks prescribed for junior high schools in the Ho West District in Ghana. Embedded in this model is the notion of functional literacy and the belief that academic literacy or school literacy entails communicative competence of or a mastery of four conventional language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

RELATED LITERATURE: TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

There are previous studies that have evaluated English as a foreign language (EFL) textbooks and English as a second language (ESL) textbooks, or a combination of the two in the school sector. Some of these studies have done so from a non-critical literacy or a *neutral* perspective, while others have done so from a critical literacy perspective. Some of the studies falling under the first category are Tok (2010), Rahimpour and Hashemi (2011), Shah et al. (2014), Heriati (2017), and Ahmad et al. (2019), whereas those related to the second category include Roohani and Heidar (2012) and Asakereh et al. (2019). For example, Tok's (2010) study evaluated an English language textbook used in the eighth grade in state primary schools in Turkey, and was carried out through investigating teachers' perspectives rather than through analysing textbook content. The respondents, who comprised 46 English teachers, were randomly selected from state primary schools in two city centres in Turkey. The study had two types of data: a five-point Likert scale questionnaire data and interview responses. The interviews focused on 'layout, and design, activities and tasks, language type, subject, content and skills and whole aspect' (Tok, 2010, p. 511). The study revealed that negative characteristics of the textbook were greater than its positive attributes. However, the current study is of the view that teacher questionnaires and interviews as employed by Tok (2010) to evaluate a textbook cannot yield any critical analysis of a given textbook as they are constrained by perceptions.

In the same vein, Rahimpour and Hashemi's (2011) study was based on the views of teachers. It evaluated three English language textbooks used in high schools in Iran. A questionnaire comprising 46 items, which represented five sections of the textbooks, was used. The five sections were: vocabulary; reading; functions of language; practice of pronunciation; and the physical structure of the textbooks and practical issues. A total of 50 teachers from 60 high schools were involved in the study. The study found that the teachers did not accept the textbooks because of the physical design and for other practical reasons. The current paper contends that physical designs of textbooks are of lesser importance than the contents and the alignment of textbooks with the syllabus.

Another study is Ahmad et al.'s (2019) study that evaluated the content of an ESL textbook (*English-2*) meant to develop grade two learners' communicative competence at public and private schools in Punjab, Pakistan. It engaged in an in-use evaluation as opposed to pre-use and post-use forms of textbook evaluation. It, then, formulated a checklist based on communicative language teaching (CLT) principles. Five of the key content areas that the checklist consisted of were: activities and tasks; skills; language type; content and subject; and overall perception. Employing content analytic approach, the study discovered that there was a mismatch between the content of the textbook, *English-2*, and the CLT principles. As such, it was deemed to be unsuitable to develop learners' communicative competence. Like the two studies discussed above, this study did not employ a critical literacy approach to its evaluation of the textbook in question.

Of the two studies mentioned earlier that utilised a critical literacy approach to their textbook evaluation, Asakereh et al.'s (2019) study has some relevance to the present study. This study employed a critical content analysis to examine English as a lingua franca (ELF) textbooks in terms of listening and speaking activities in Iranian junior and high schools. The textbooks were part of *Prospect* and *Vision* series published in Iran. The first series comprised three textbooks (*Prospect 1*, *2*, and *3*) prescribed for junior high schools, and the second series, too, consisted of three textbooks (*Vision 1*, *2*, and *3*) prescribed for senior high schools. One of the three criteria for the content analysis of listening activities was, *exposure to authentic interactions in a variety of international contexts*, while *engaging students with real-life ELF interactions and experiences*, was one of the three criteria for the content analysis of speaking activities. The study found that the two ELF textbook series did not offer a full picture of the manner in which English was used today. In particular, it found that the textbooks lacked diversity in terms of their depiction of characters, contexts, and cultural elements. The textbooks also lacked linguistic variation characterising today's multicultural and multilingual contexts, and failed to raise learners' awareness of these complex contexts. The relevance of this study lies in its effort to establish whether or not prescribed ELF textbooks attempted to raise learners' awareness of how English is used.

Two more studies that are relevant to the current study, but which evaluated English language textbooks from a non-critical literacy perspective, are Shah et al.'s (2014) and Heriati's (2017) studies. Their relevance lies in the fact they

both employed Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains in evaluating textbooks. For instance, Shah et al.'s (2014) study employed Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains as its criteria to evaluate an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) textbook, which was recommended by the British Council and approved by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan for use in Pakistan universities. The purpose of this study was to ascertain the effectiveness of the textbook in meeting the needs of the students by analysing the frequency in which each of Bloom's learning domains was used to measure cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills. However, the study did not examine the textbook's alignment to the English language curriculum for which it was meant.

Similarly, Heriati's (2017) study also utilised Bloom's learning domains taxonomy to analyse a school textbook entitled *Think Globally Act Locally* with a view to determining the extent to which it was aligned to the English language curriculum in Indonesia. This study found materials incorporated in the textbook to have a high degree of alignment with the curriculum. Against this background, the current study set out to examine the promotion of critical language awareness by analysing the frequency to which a modified version of Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive domains as contemplated in the EAL textbooks prescribed for junior high schools in Ghana focused on these cognitive skills.

In Ghana, most of the studies conducted to evaluate EAL textbooks at a school level do not seem to have any relevance to the current study. For instance, Owu-Ewuie's (2014) study investigated four different sets of junior high school (first, second, and third grade) EAL textbooks. This study found that most of the passages in these textbooks were above the age of the learners and were difficult for them to comprehend. Nevertheless, it did not to examine whether these textbooks were aligned to the syllabus. Another study by Opoku-Amankwa, Brew-Hammond and Mahama (2012) examined two literacy development programmes in Ghanaian basic schools. The study involved two streams of schools, a primary school and a junior high school, in Kumasi, in Ghana. It did not evaluate the books for the suitability of their contents. Instead, it focused on the monitoring and supervision of reading in the schools and learners' access to reading materials. A further study conducted by Opoku-Amankwa, Brew-Hammond and Kofigah, (2011) appears to be the only available study which has tried to find out how a set of EAL textbooks used in the Ghanaian basic school system were aligned with the curriculum. However, this study focused only on primary school EAL textbooks, and collected its data through interviews.

Against this background, the present study set out to answer two research questions (RQs):

- RQ1: To what extent do English as an additional language (EAL) textbooks for junior high schools in the Ho West District of Ghana accommodate a modified version of Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive learning dimensions?
- RQ2: To what extent does the academic content of these textbooks have elements of other school subjects?
- RQ3: To what degree does this academic content help develop critical language awareness as a feature of critical literacy related to Cummins' cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in the three textbooks?

METHODOLOGY: MIXED METHODS APPROACH

This study was part of a larger study that used a transformative mixed-methods approach. As Creswell (2014, p. 16) points out, a transformative mixed-methods approach employs 'a theoretical lens drawn from social justice or power.' The social justice-power nexus is realised in this study through a critical literacy lens. In this way, this type of mixed-methods approach included elements of qualitative and quantitative datasets. Against this background, the current study adopted a case study research design. Three key characteristics of a case study design are: thick descriptions, in-depth explanations and detailed contextual analysis. In this way, a case can be one phenomenon or more (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). In the present study, five junior high schools, on the one hand, constituted five cases, and three EAL textbooks, *Book 1*, *Book 2*, and *Book 3*, represented three cases.

Sampling Techniques and Data Collection Procedure

This study was conducted in 2019. It used a purposive sampling technique, which is also known as purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) or judgment sampling (Berg, 2001), to choose five junior high schools in Ghana's Ho West District as the major focal point of its investigation. This technique was selected because the four junior high schools selected had not been performing well in terms of their year-end examination results in the Ho West District, while the fifth school's year-end examination results had for a while been relatively better than those of the other four schools. In terms of the three textbooks, at the time of conducting the study, they were the only EAL textbooks prescribed for junior high schools in the Ho West District.

Two checklists were designed and utilized as instruments to collect data from the three textbooks. The first checklist comprised cognitive learning dimensions based on a modified version of Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive learning dimensions, while the second checklist consisted of language elements that were based on Cummins' (1999) CALP. For the first checklist, exercise questions under each unit in each textbook were ticked according to the cognitive learning dimensions to which they fitted. This was done by determining the instruction which the main verb gave in the question. If the main verb did not give a clear instruction, then a detailed illustration for the various cognitive learning dimensions provided a clue to the appropriate cognitive learning dimension and to a column that needed to be ticked. A particular verb which gave the clue was written in italics as the main verb for the question being examined. Moreover, the number of ticks for each dimension was calculated and graphs drawn to represent the frequencies to which the various cognitive learning dimensions occurred.

With respect to the second checklist, the academic and language content of the three textbooks were evaluated in line with Cummins' (1999) CALP. This included cognitive

elements (thinking skills), academic elements (integration of various academic subjects), and language elements (fostering critical language awareness, and comparing language elements) (see Cummins, 1983, 1984, 1999). This checklist was used to examine units, sections and topics in the three textbooks to ascertain whether they contained aspects of other subjects. Lastly, an ethical clearance certificate to conduct this study was granted by a relevant research ethics review committee at the University of South Africa: its number was, 2018-CHS-0032.

Data Analysis

The study employed qualitative content analysis (QCA) (see Hisieh & Shannon, 2005) to analyse datasets it extracted from the three EAL textbooks used at the five junior high schools in Ghana's Ho West District during the 2019 school year. It adopted a summative approach to QCA as recommended by Hisieh and Shannon (2005). A starting point for QCA is identifying and quantifying words or features of content in a given text with a view to comprehending the contextual use of such words or such features of content. The quantification process is less about attempting to infer meaning, but more about exploring content usage. There are two levels of analysis for QCA: manifest content analysis and latent content analysis. The former entails analysing for the presence and appearance of a specific content or word, and focuses on the quantitative counting of the occurrence frequency of a particular word. The latter involves establishing underlying meanings of words or content in order to contextually interpret such words or such a content (Hisieh & Shannon, 2005; also see Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019).

For the present study, both manifest content analysis and latent content analysis were applied to the three EAL textbooks within a QCA framework. Specified content items in the three textbooks as mentioned in the preceding section were identified and evaluated. Scores were generated from the questions supplied in the teaching and learning activities in each unit of the textbook. These scores were calculated and their frequencies represented in graphs and tables based on a modified version of Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive learning dimensions (see Adams, 2015, Bloom, 1956). Then, all of this textbook content information was interpreted for its contextual meanings. As mentioned earlier, a modified version of Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive learning dimensions comprise cognitive skills that range, in continuum, from lower-order thinking skills to higher-order thinking skills. These are: knowledge; comprehension; application; analysis; synthesis; and evaluation (Adams, 2015; Bloom, 1956). Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) revised this taxonomy as follows: remembering; understanding; applying; analysing; evaluating; and creating. In the current study, this taxonomy was modified and used as follows: knowledge; understanding; application; analysis; inventive thinking; and evaluation. This taxonomy also incorporated three dimensions of Cummins' (1999) framework: cognitive, academic, and language dimensions. These three dimensions are part of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). The latter, according to Cummins (1983, 1984), is the type of proficiency that requires EAL students to participate and communicate in cognitively demanding written and oral contexts characterized by diverse academic texts and by class discussions and lectures. In this case, the cognitive dimension is about activities that are cognitively challenging and that require students to apply high-order thinking skills as opposed to low-order thinking skills. The academic dimension relates to how academic content (e.g., mathematics, science, art, social science, etc.) integrates language instruction, while the language dimension has to do with developing critical language awareness in students. CALP contrasts with basic interpersonal communication skill (BICS), which involves everyday social language in which students engage. Most importantly, CALP requires students to operate at Bloom's high-order thinking skills such as analysis, inventive thinking, and evaluation (Cummins, 1983, 1984, 1999; also see Abriam-Yago et al., 1999).

FINDINGS

A Modified Version of Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Learning Dimensions: Lower-Order Thinking Skills Taking Precedence over Higher-Order Thinking Skills

As mentioned above, instances of cognitive learning dimensions as contemplated in the three EAL textbooks were presented in graphs and tables. In both cases, the scores of learning dimensions were arranged according to the six cognitive skills categories to which they belonged. The scores were generated from the questions provided in the teaching and learning activities in each unit of the three textbooks. For example, for *Book 1*, as shown in Figure 1, out of 668 questions taken from its teaching and learning activities and exercises, knowledge, which is the lowest-order thinking skill, had the highest score of 469 (70.2%). This was followed by the second lowest-order thinking skill, understanding, which scored 129 (19.3%). Evaluation, which is considered as the highest form of thinking, instead, scored 9 (1.3 %).

From Figure 1, it can be noted that the objective of the syllabus that evaluation must be tested more did not seem to be fulfilled in the EAL textbook, *Book 1.* The next figure presents scores for the cognitive learning dimensions of JHS EAL *Book 2*. A similar trend can be observed in *Book 2* as represented in Figure 2. Of the 540 questions that the textbook had, 292 (54.17%) were knowledge-based questions. These were, again, followed by 132 questions that tested understanding, all of which amounted to 24.44%. By contrast, evaluation, which is the highest level of thinking scored 4 (0.74%). Inventive thinking, which had to do mainly with essay writing, scored 45 (8.33%). Again, the objective of the syllabus that higher-order thinking skills be given more weight seemed not to have been achieved in *Book 2*.

Figure 2 clearly shows that the bar representing knowledge (the lowest-order thinking skill) is higher than the rest of the bars. Inventive thinking follows application as it is related to the essay questions in the textbook.

Similarly, Figure 3 displays the scores for the cognitive learning dimensions of EAL *Book 3*. Here, too, knowledge scored higher than the other five cognitive learning

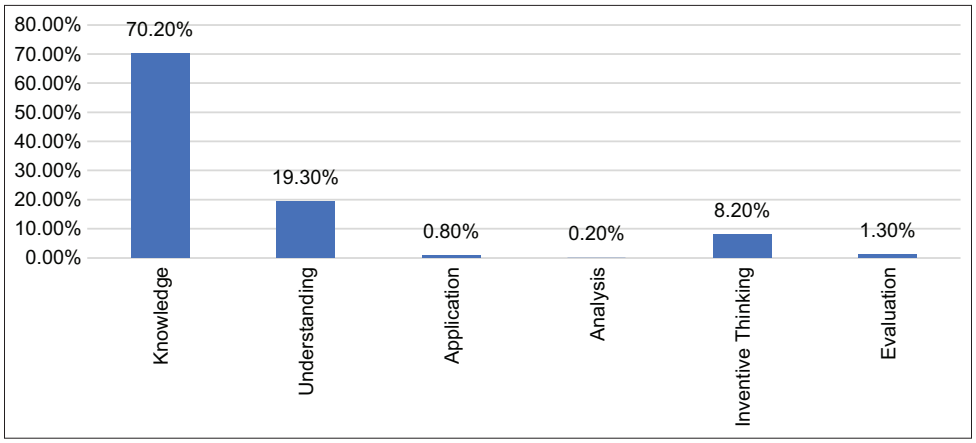

Figure 1. A graph representing the scoring of cognitive learning dimensions in JHS EAL *Book 1*

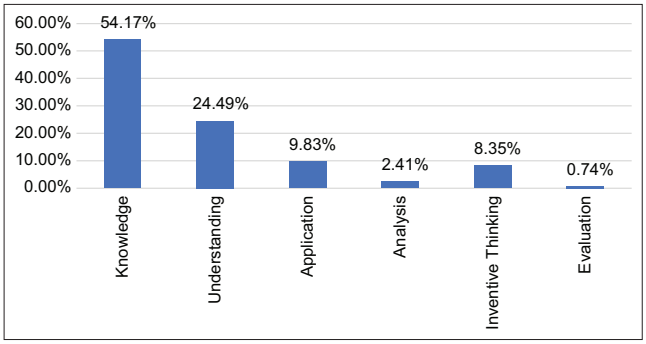

Figure 2. A graph representing the cognitive learning dimensions in JHS EAL *Book 2*

dimensions at 216 (61.19%) out of the total of 353 questions. Again, it was followed by understanding, which scored 85 (24.08%). Like the other two textbooks, *Book 3* also had fewer questions related to evaluation as a higher-order thinking skill, whose score was 3 (0.85%). In addition, inventive thinking emerged as the third ranking skill at 33 (9.35%) due to several essay questions it contained.

Language Instruction Integration and Absence of Critical Language Awareness Development

The information about the academic content and the development of critical language awareness (CLA) in *Book 1* is represented in Table 1. Of the 30 units that the textbook had, 21 of them (70%) had elements of the academic content from other school subjects such as indigenous languages, while 9 units (30%) did not. On the contrary, all of the units (100%) did not allow for the development of CLA on the part of learners.

A similar pattern tends to apply to *Book 2*, too, as illustrated in Table 2. Here, all the 26 units (100%) of the textbook did not provide for the development of CLA. However, 85% of the units (22 units) had elements of the academic content from other subjects.

For *Book 3*, 50% of the units (13 units) contained elements of the academic content from other subjects, while the other 50% did not. As is the case with the previous two textbooks, all the units (100%) in *Book 3* did not cater for development of CLA (see Table 3).

DISCUSSION

For the first research question (RQ1), knowledge was the highly rated or the most foregrounded thinking skill in all the three evaluated EAL textbooks used by the five sampled junior high schools in Ghana's Ho West District. It was followed by understanding in all the three textbooks, with inventive thinking being rated third in two of these textbooks (*Books 1* and *3*). This means that of the six cognitive dimensions of a modified version of Bloom's taxonomy that are calibrated in degrees of cognitive complexity (e.g., from lower-order thinking skills to higher-order thinking skills), the learner activities of the three textbooks put more emphasis on the first two lower-order thinking skills than on higher-order thinking skills. This particular finding is consistent with Olimat's (2015) textbook evaluation study. Conducted in Jordan, this study evaluated English textbooks for grades seven, eight, nine and ten, and found that questions in theses textbooks focused more on knowledge and comprehension as lower-order thinking skills than on higher-order thinking skills (cf. Goktepe, 2015). Olimat (2015) aptly captures this point: "[t]his is an indication that the English textbook questions focus a lot on knowledge and comprehension questions at the expense of the other categories" (p. 158).

Knowledge is a foundational thinking skill that entails, among other things, mastering discrete facts, terms, patterns, or pieces of information. It requires memorising information or facts sequentially. For its part, understanding is more about comprehending, assimilating and retrieving information sequentially (Adams, 2015; Olimat, 2015). In this sense, they both represent factual/conceptual knowledge and factual/conceptual knowledge comprehension, respectively (see Goktepe, 2015). Therefore, it seems the three textbooks preferred these two successive lower-order thinking skills to higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, inventive thinking (synthesis) and evaluation. Even in the two instances in which inventive thinking scored better than the three other thinking skills (application, analysis and evaluation), it did so because it related mainly to essay writing. But even in those instances, it only had marginal scores (e.g., 8.20% and 9.35% in *Books 1* and *3*, respectively. In this way, the three textbooks evaluated in the current study failed to engage students in CALP activities, which require students to

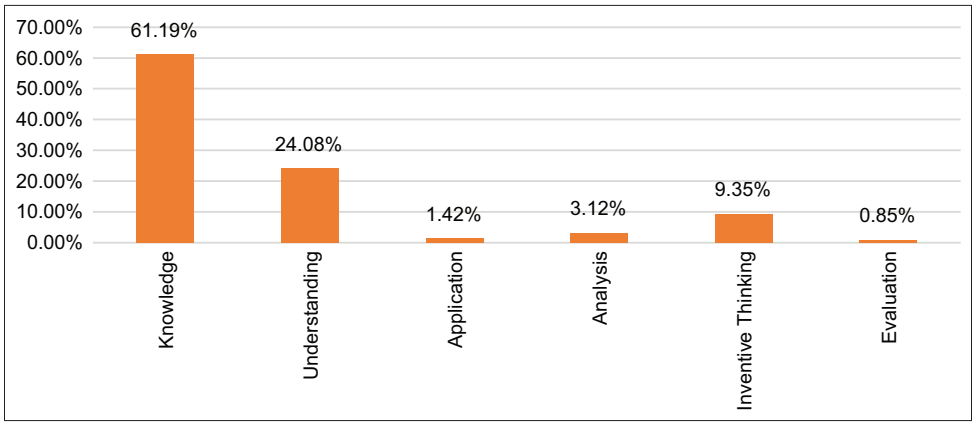

Figure 3. A graph representing the cognitive learning dimensions in JHS EAL *Book 3*

Table 1. The scoring of academic content and development of critical language awareness in EAL *Book 1*

CODES	TEXTBOOK UNITS	ACADEMIC CONTENT (ELEMENTS FROM SCHOOL OTHER SUBJECTS)	TEXTBOOK UNITS	DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS
P	21	70%	0	0%
NP	9	30%	30	100%
TOTAL	30	100%	30	100%

P = present; NP = not present

Table 2. The scoring of academic content and development of critical language awareness in EAL *Book 2*

CODES	TEXTBOOK UNITS	ACADEMIC CONTENT (ELEMENTS FROM SCHOOL OTHER SUBJECTS)	TEXTBOOK UNITS	DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS
P	22	84.62%	0	0%
NP	4	15.38%	26	100%
TOTAL	26	100%	26	100%

Table 3. The scoring of academic content and development of critical language awareness in EAL *Book 3*

CODES	TEXTBOOK UNITS	ACADEMIC CONTENT (ELEMENTS FROM SCHOOL OTHER SUBJECTS)	TEXTBOOK UNITS	DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS
P	13	50%	0	0%
NP	13	50%	26	100%
TOTAL	26	100%	26	100%

function at Bloom's high-order thinking skills like analysis, inventive thinking, and evaluation (Abriam-Yago et al., 1999; Cummins, 1983, 1984).

Concerning RQ2, the academic content of 21 units (70%) in *Book 1* incorporated the elements of the academic content from other school-related subjects, one of which was indigenous languages. The same applied to *Book 2* where the score for the incorporation of the elements of the academic content from other school subjects was almost 85% (22 units). However. The score for this item was 50% (13 units) for *Book 3*. At a junior high school level, where English for academic purposes or English for specific purposes is not taught, this development is both significant and progressive. This is so notwithstanding the fact that this infusion of the academic content elements of other school subjects amounted for only 50% for *Book 3*. That is, infusing academic content elements of other school subjects is equivalent to applying an English-across-the-curriculum approach (cf. Horner, 2013). Moreover, this infusion approach has the possibility of exposing learners to multiple genre perspectives even if this is not an overt intention. Thus, the three textbooks did manage to accommodate the academic language content integration as required by Cummins' (1999) CALP.

Regarding RQ3, CLA seemed not to have been developed in all the units of the three EAL textbooks. This means that none of the units of the three textbook attempted to foster any form of CLA on the part of learners, or any form of learner language awareness as is required by CALP. Additionally, this means that the three textbooks failed to promote teacher language awareness, or what Hu and Gao (2021) regard as

teachers' perceived roles that language plays in the classroom, in learner needs, in content learning, and in language pedagogy. When textbooks fail to expose learners to CLA, this is likely to lead to learners having an autonomous, technical, and neutral view of language similar to the autonomous view of literacy (see Street, 1984, 2003). If this is the case, then, there is no way learners can be exposed to the possibility of challenging common sense assumptions, of reading texts from multiple perspectives, and of producing their own counter texts or narratives in line with a critical literacy approach (see Gómez Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; Janks, 2014; Ko, 2013; Perry, 2012).

CONCLUSION

This study set out to answer the three research questions (RQs) mentioned earlier. Pertaining to RQ1, both knowledge and understanding were the most highly rated cognitive skills, respectively, in the three evaluated EAL textbooks used by the five junior high schools in the Ho West District, in Ghana. Knowledge was rated not only higher than understanding, but also higher than the other four cognitive skills in the modified version of Bloom's taxonomy as well as in Cummins' CALP that was employed to evaluate these textbooks. Overall, this implies that these textbooks placed more primacy on applying knowledge as a lower-order, foundational thinking skill than on higher-order, critical thinking skills. This observation tends to dovetail with the finding that all the units of the three textbooks lacked any form of critical language awareness (CLA) as required by CALP. The latter (CALP), is often associated with critical thinking and critical literacy ability.

With regard to RQ2, all the three EFA textbooks had elements of other school subjects (e.g., indigenous languages) infused in their academic language content. This implies that these textbooks had the potential to expose learners, intentionally or unintentionally, to multiple genres. In this case, they all accommodated CALP's requirement to integrate language instruction with content subjects. In relation to RQ3, all the three textbooks did not have elements that exposed learners to CLA in all their respective units. The implication of this finding is that the three textbooks seem not to hold any prospect to expose learners to multiple perspectives. Neither do they seem to offer learners the opportunity to produce their own counter texts; to challenge common sense assumptions embedded in language; and to apply resistant or oppositional reading to texts. Moreover, they fail to foster CLA or teacher language awareness in teachers who often mediate language and learning for learners. This particular mono-dimensional orientation toward language has elements of an autonomous, technical, and neutral view of language, and stands in stark contrast to a critical literacy view of language.

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