Journal of Effective Teaching and Learning Practices. 2025;2(3):110-123
eISSN: 3048-9601

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Examining Critical Thinking Skills in English Textbooks at Primary Schools in Vietnam

Nguyen Thi Huong[1] , Nguyen Thi Xuan[2]

School of Languages and Tourism, Hanoi University of Industry, Viet Nam[1]

Trung Hoa Primary School, Viet Nam[2]

huongnt_nn@haui.edu.vn

https://doi.org/10.70372/jeltp.v2.i3.64

Abstract

Critical thinking (CT) is one of the most important skills in 21st-century education, especially in learning English as a foreign language (EFL). This study aims to examine the extent to which CT skills are expressed in English textbooks used at the primary level in Vietnam, specifically the *Wonderful World 4* - Book 1 & 2. Based on Facione's (1990) theoretical framework with six core skills, the study employs a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative content analysis and quantitative coding. A total of 324 learning activities were collected and categorized by skills. The results show that only about 21% of activities truly promote higher-order thinking such as evaluation and reasoning; interpretation and explanation skills are the most common, while self-regulation skills are rare. It is also clearly shown that CT skills in the *Wonderful World 4* textbooks are still integrated in a limited and uneven manner. Therefore, it is suggested to make necessary changes to the textbooks' design and teaching methods in order to comprehensively develop students' CT abilities.

Keywords - Critical Thinking Skills; Textbook Evaluation; Facione Framework; Wonderful World 4; 21st -century skills

Introduction

In the context of 21st-century education, developing students' CT skills is becoming one of the most important goals in the new general education curriculum of many countries, including Vietnam. Students will be prepared to meet the increasing demands of the labor force market by using these fifteen skills in education. CT has become one of the most essential skills in this century. Therefore, teaching and learning must be defined to support critical self-reflection skills, that is, through the use of textbooks. Although the education system of this century emphasizes promoting critical analysis as a goal, language education particularly benefits from this focus worldwide. CT necessitates the methodical examination, assessment, and reorganization of ideas, enabling learners to exercise self-control and elevate the calibre of their own thought processes.

When teaching and studying English as a foreign language (EFL), this is an essential phase. For students to solve challenging language difficulties, CT abilities must be developed.

According to Cottrell (2017), CT includes contextual application, meaning that students can apply CT to a real-life situation. The author also emphasizes the self-management of students to help them become independent and flexible thinkers. Li (2016) asserts that CT is essential for students when learning a foreign language and plays an important role in the learning process. To develop CT skills sustainably and throughout life, it is important to create a favorable environment to practice these skills from the early stages of the educational process. The reason is that no one can naturally become a critical thinker before they mature. Therefore, CT needs to be systematically guided in the learning process to form and develop this skill in young children. This is because CT is not an innate ability in children (Halpern, 2002; Kenney, 2013).

While the development of CT skills largely depends on the teacher's ability and expertise in teaching, textbooks-as the primary teaching tool-play an essential role in this process. As the primary means of conveying the content of the curriculum, textbooks not only transmit knowledge but also reflect the perspectives and educational orientations of the authors. Tomlinson (2011) asserts that textbooks influence students' cognitive development in addition to serving as tools for language support. Many studies have shown that EFL textbooks incorporate exercises and CT activities. **(**Solihati & Hikmat, 2018; Baig, Siddiquah & Javed, 2021**).** However, there is still a lack of active research on integrating these components into textbooks, especially for elementary school students. **(**Es-Salhi & Elfatihi, 2019**).**

The field of language education research is still in its early stages, especially when it comes to CT. However, a significant number of researchers in this field are concentrating their attention on higher education and university levels. (Nguyen, 2022). This leads to a lack of awareness about incorporating CT into primary school textbooks. Furthermore, recent studies have not yet fully examined the impact of textbooks, which are widely regarded as the primary teaching tool in the classroom. (Ellis, 1997). Vietnam faces significant challenges in encouraging the development of CT through textbooks, as rote learning and the authoritative role of instructors still prevail. (Nguyen, 2017). Another research conducted by Le (2018) critically examined the moral precepts included in locally written Vietnamese EFL textbooks for upper secondary school pupils. This chapter discovered that, although the textbooks contained universal moral principles and Vietnamese, the learning exercises did not adequately encourage students to use their language skills or use statistical data for CT and problem-solving. Consequently, both the study teachers' and students' comprehension and use of CT in English as EFL were influenced by the Vietnamese teaching culture.

Studies conducted around the world and in Vietnam emphasize the use of CT in education, particularly in the teaching of English. However, the integration of CT in *Wonderful World 4* textbooks has not been thoroughly explored in the Vietnamese context. Previous evaluations of CT in textbooks frequently disregarded important elements, including structure, language content, design, and student demands. The author is motivated to carry out an investigation on the textbooks *Wonderful World 4,* which are being used in some primary schools in Vietnam . Thus, this study was conducted to contribute to bridging the gap in the current research field by answering the following research question:

+ *To explore the manifestation of CT skills in the English textbooks Wonderful World 4*.

Literature review

Definition of CT

CT is widely acknowledged as an essential talent in modern education, relevant at all educational levels, from primary schools to higher education. CT, as articulated by Cottrell (2011), is the capacity to interrogate fundamental assumptions, rigorously evaluate arguments, and integrate knowledge to arrive at substantiated conclusions. It has been claimed that CT in primary education helps students be more active in learning and provides an opportunity for the development of problem-solving skills, reflective thinking, and independence in learning. Enrico et al. (2015) and Eric & Nicole (2017) support this idea. CT might thus be seen not only as a way of achieving cognitive processes but also as an attitude necessary for the development of intellectual curiosity and more profound engagement with content. CT at an early age in primary education, during which students are just beginning to form the cognitive frameworks that will shape future learning, turns out to be more adaptable and versatile learners. By building an atmosphere in which youngsters learn to question, reflect, and connect ideas, educators can help students lay the foundation for becoming more confident and autonomous thinkers who can find their way around both intellectual and everyday problems.

Classifications of CT

CT is a complex cognitive skill that encompasses various analytical and reflective abilities. According to Cottrell (2011), CT includes skills such as analysis, evaluation, inference, and reflection. Accordingly, it helps people raise awareness, break down information, check whether arguments are logical, and draw reasonable conclusions. Reflective thinking is particularly important for developing self-awareness and independent intelligence. Similarly, Bassham (2011) argues that CT is a combination of various cognitive skills and dispositions; these skills include evaluative thinking (examining rationality and credibility) and analytical thinking (separating information). The authors also emphasize that creative thinking is necessary to find new solutions. Cottrell and Bassham argue that CT is a set of logical and systematic thinking skills necessary for effective learning and decision-making.

Among the widely recognized models, Peter A. Facione's six skills model (1990) is a highly influential theoretical framework and serves as the foundation of this research. Facione published the research results funded by the American Philosophical Association (APA), using the Delphi method with the participation of 46 esteemed experts in the field of teaching and assessing CT. After two years of work, the group of experts reached a consensus on the definition and core components of CT.

Accordingly, CT is defined as a deliberate and self-regulating evaluation process aimed at interpretation, analysis, assessment, and reasoning. This process includes clearly explaining the basis of evidence, concepts, methods, or contexts that underpin judgments. This definition is not only general but also reflects interdisciplinary consensus, widely used in many academic fields.

Facione's model includes six core skills, each of which is further divided into specific sub-skills as follows:

Interpretation: includes sub-skills such as classification, decoding meaning, clarifying information.

Analysis: includes argument analysis, identifying points, exploring inferential relationships.

Evaluation: includes assessing the reliability of information and the logical strength of arguments.

Inference: the ability to draw reasonable conclusions from available data, evidence, and opinions.

Explanation: includes presenting, explaining, and defending arguments and thought processes. *Self-regulation:* refers to the ability to self-monitor, evaluate, and adjust one's own thinking process.

This is a metacognitive skill because it requires learners to simultaneously apply other skills to evaluate their thinking. Facione notes that the six skills above do not follow any fixed logical order or hierarchy of thought, and are not intended to construct an educational classification system. This differs from Krathwohl's (2002) model, which categorizes skills such as interpretation, reasoning, and explanation into the group of lower-order thinking skills (belonging to the "understanding" level in Bloom's taxonomy). Meanwhile, Facione considers these core, essential skills for developing true critical thinking. (Al-Rahbi et al., 2022)

The Importance of CT in Education

Studies on CT have shown that this skill plays a key role in education from primary school to higher education. CT develops the skills that will enable a student to be more aware of how to solve the complex challenges at hand, to make informed decisions, and to engage with diverse perspectives amidst an ever-awakening world filled with information congestion.

CT in primary education is especially important because the children begin to build their cognitive frameworks. Research has suggested that infusing CT into teaching can significantly improve problem-solving ability, reflective thinking, and independent learning in students. (Darmawati & Mustadi, 2023). As an example, Cottrell (2011) reveals that, besides attention and observation, CT develops in students the competencies of identifying important points, responding with validity to messages, and critically watching situations.

Moreover, CT has many beneficial impacts beyond academic success. By encouraging students to think more critically, educators are teaching students a mindset towards intellectual curiosity and a deeper engagement with content. When CT is developed from the early stages, learners approach their learning journey by developing skills of evaluating information independently. Developing CT, one supports cognitive development and prepares students to be able to make more difficult decisions over the whole course of their education. However, demonstrating CT in academic practice is not always simple. This study shows that CT not only needs to be taught but also needs to be supported in its development through pre-writing strategies such as brainstorming and mind mapping.

CT plays a fundamental role in education and helps CT not only plays a fundamental role in education but also helps you learn better. According to Paul (2005), those with CT skills will also become effective learners, as CT is the true way to grasp knowledge (pp. 29–31). Elder and Paul (2010) support this view and emphasize that the quality of thinking affects the quality of learning-better thinking leads to more effective learning and vice versa.

Additionally, numerous experimental studies have been conducted to demonstrate the positive impact of CT on learning outcomes. In a literature review on the application of CT in accounting education, Latif et al. (2019) demonstrated a clear link between this skill and improved student learning outcomes. They also emphasized that higher education must include CT to equip students with the ability to cope flexibly with life's difficulties. However, Morris et al. (2019, cited in Al-Rahbi et al., 2022) used a pre-post test method to assess students' CT skills after ten weeks of study. The comparison results show a clear improvement and are consistent with many other studies. It also proves that the programme has a positive impact on the academic development of learners. In summary, these studies suggest that, although CT is only taught for a short period, it still yields good results and can be used in many educational fields.

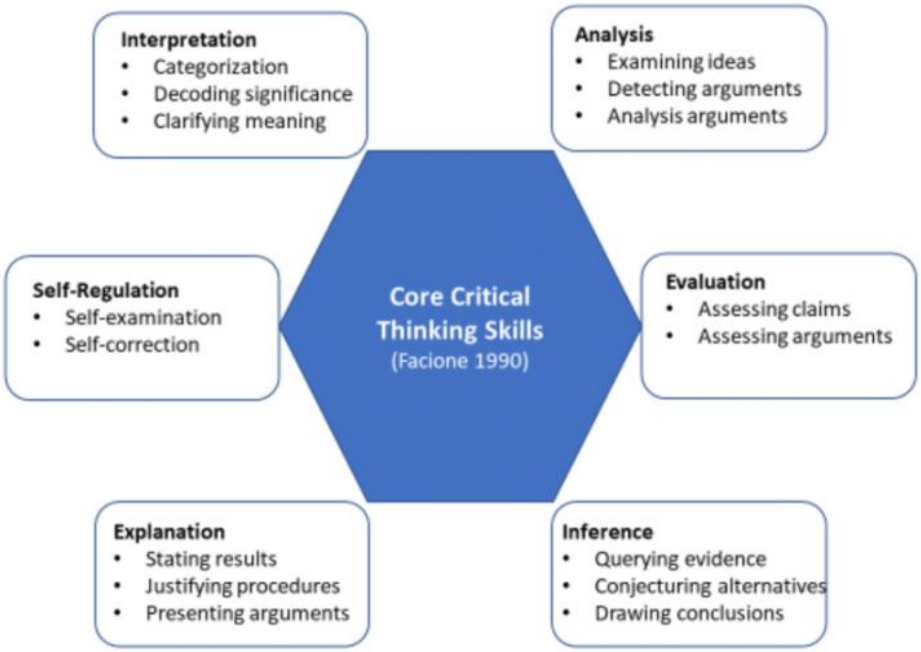
Wonderful World 4 is a core component in the inclusion of CT elements, which is currently used at the level of primary education in Vietnam. The textbooks can introduce well-structured activities that prompt students to question assumptions, analyze arguments, and synthesize information. The degree to which *Wonderful World 4* integrates these components of critical thinking thus provides a useful insight into the effectiveness of the textbooks in fostering critical engagement among young learners.

Theoretical Framework: Facione's Framework

The inclusion of more CT elements in the curriculum and textbooks is an important goal in education to achieve comprehensive development in students' abilities. The different theoretical frameworks usually analyze the CT factors stated by textbooks. The most popular and widely used theoretical frameworks include Bloom's Taxonomy (2001), the Socratic Method and Facione's (1990). The theoretical frameworks are of significant importance regarding the measurement and analysis of the students' CT abilities with the help of tasks and questions provided in textbooks.

To evaluate the integration of CT in textbooks, it is important to adopt well-established theoretical frameworks. This study was consistently grounded in the major framework: the Facione's (1990) model as its guiding theoretical framework."

Figure 1: Core CT Skills (Drawing on Facione, 1990, p. 12)



This study employed Facione's (1990) framework of CT, which was a part of the *Delphi Report* on CT. According to Facione, CT is understood as a purposeful, self-regulatory process of judgment that involves interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. These six core skills form a widely accepted and comprehensive model to assess the depth and quality of CT in educational materials.

This framework is particularly useful for evaluating textbooks, as it offers a detailed breakdown of specific cognitive skills, which allows researchers to go beyond the hierarchical view of Bloom's Taxonomy and assess how students process and evaluate information. In this

study, Facione's model is used to classify and quantify the types of CT activities embedded in the *Wonderful World 4* textbooks, providing a complementary perspective to Bloom's hierarchical structure. Facione's model offers a more detailed lens for specific critical thinking skills. This framework forms a comprehensive theoretical basis for evaluating CT elements in *Wonderful World 4* textbooks.

Previous Studies on CT the English Textbooks

Many studies worldwide have analyzed the level of integration of CT in English textbooks, with results showing a significant difference in the quality and frequency of higher-order thinking skills. Aslan and Polat (2008) studied Turkish language textbooks and pointed out that the majority of questions only require memorization, not encouraging CT. In contrast, Sucipto & Cahyo (2019) showed that some modern books have better facilitated students in developing this skill through group discussions, problem-solving, and project-based learning. Nainggolan & Wirza (2021) analyzed the book *English in Mind* and found over 100 questions containing elements of CT such as argumentation, evaluation, and prediction. In Oman, the study by Al-Rahbi et al. (2022) shows that only 35.55% of activities in the 4th-grade textbook incorporate CT elements, with the majority still leaning towards knowledge reception. In Iran, Aghababaeian et al. (2017) analyzed sociology textbooks and found that the level of integration of CT was very low over the past 30 years. In contrast, the study by Ng & Jeyaraj (2023) in Malaysia shows that the frequency of CT activities in high school textbooks is quite high, although still lacking in diversity. In Vietnam, Nguyen & Duong's (2024) study on the *Super Minds 3* textbook notes the integration of skills such as reasoning, evaluation, and clarification of viewpoints; however, it is not comprehensive and uniform. In a broader qualitative study on the application of CT in an EFL environment in Vietnam, a paper by Nguyen (2022) presents the results of a survey examining how Vietnamese EFL professors and students explain CT at a university. In her study, Le (2018) examined the ethical principles in EFL textbooks written by Vietnamese authors for high school students. These results show that although textbooks include universal and Vietnamese ethical principles, learning activities do not focus on problem-solving, applying data systems to CT, and language practice. Therefore, Vietnamese teaching culture has determined how teachers and students in the study understand and use the curriculum in English.

Overall, current English textbooks-especially at the primary level-still lack a systematic approach to developing CT. Many activities are still closed-ended, not encouraging students to engage in CT, ask questions, or self-assess. Especially in Vietnam, there has been no research applying Facione's (1990) theoretical framework to analyze the textbook *Wonderful World 4;* therefore ,this study is conducted to fill that gap.

Method

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data. The primary method for identifying CT components was qualitative content analysis. An analysis checklist of activities has been developed based on the CT skills model proposed by Facione (1990). This model was chosen as the analytical framework because it is one of the widely recognized classification systems, receiving broad consensus from experts in various fields of CT, as noted in the famous Delphi report (Facione, 1990). The sub-skills of CT in the

model are used as an analytical framework, while each learning task in the two books *Wonderful World 4 – Book 1 & 2* is considered a separate unit of analysis.

The prevalence of these features in *Wonderful World 4* was measured using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to offer an overview of CT representation in *Wonderful World 4*. The textbook evaluation was strengthened by this combination of qualitative and quantitative insights.

Data Sources

The *Wonderful World 4* textbooks are compiled based on the original book *The Wonderful World 2* – Student Book (Second Edition), copyrighted by National Geographic Learning, a unit of Cengage. The Vietnamese version included two books: book 1 (from Unit 1 to Unit 6) and book 2 (from Unit 7 to Unit 12); each volume has 84 pages. The books are built with themes revolving around nature and world culture, in line with the educational philosophy of "*Bringing the world to the classroom and the classroom to life."* Through real-life images and vivid videos from the National Geographic channel, students could explore many countries, cultures, people, and diverse customs in the world, thereby expanding global awareness.

The books focus on developing learners' communicative and interactive competence. Learning activities are personalized, aiming to develop listening, speaking, skills, the ability to respond in English communication, and creating conditions for students to express their personal views. In addition, the books are also supported by a rich source of digital learning materials for teachers, making teaching flexible, lively, and close to reality.

As can be seen from table 1, *Wonderful World 4* textbooks contain a total of 324 tasks distributed relatively evenly across the 12 units. Table 1 shows the distribution of tasks per unit in the *Wonderful World 4* textbooks.

Table 1: Task Assignment for Units of Wonderful World 4

Units	Tasks
Unit 1	27
Unit 2	27
Unit 3	27
Unit 4	27
Unit 5	27
Unit 6	27
Unit 7	27
Unit 8	27
Unit 9	27
Unit 10	27
Unit 11	27
Unit 12	27
Total	324

Data Collection

First, the researcher adapted a coding guideline based on the study by Al-Rahbi et al. (2022), which includes three main parts:
Part 1: Presenting the core CT skills along with definitions, according to Facione's model (1990).
Part 2: List the corresponding sub-skills of CT and their definitions, also based on Facione (1990).
Part 3: Provide illustrative examples for each sub-skill. Some examples are taken from Facione (1990), while the remaining examples are selected from the content of the book *Wonderful World 4*.

Next, the researcher developed a preliminary coding sheet, consisting of 12 charts corresponding to the 12 units of study in *Wonderful World 4*. Each chart is divided into three rows (corresponding to three lessons) and nine columns (representing nine activities/tasks in each lesson). All the tasks in the book have been tracked and recorded, noting those that integrate CT skills into this form.

Based on the chosen theoretical model, the research team developed a coding guideline table that includes definitions, sub-skills, and illustrative examples. From there, a preliminary coding table consisting of 12 charts (corresponding to 12 learning units) was designed to track and record data. Finally, a comprehensive content analysis checklist was created to systematize all the analysis results from the coding sheets.

Each learning task in both volumes of the *Wonderful World 4*- Book 1 & 2 is thoroughly read and analyzed based on the coding guideline table. If a task clearly demonstrates the integration of CT skills, the corresponding skill code will be recorded in the coding table. After completing the coding, the data is transferred to a summary table and analyzed using two methods: qualitative (based on the description and classification of skills) and quantitative (frequency statistics, percentage of CT skills appearing in each learning unit).

Statistical Tools

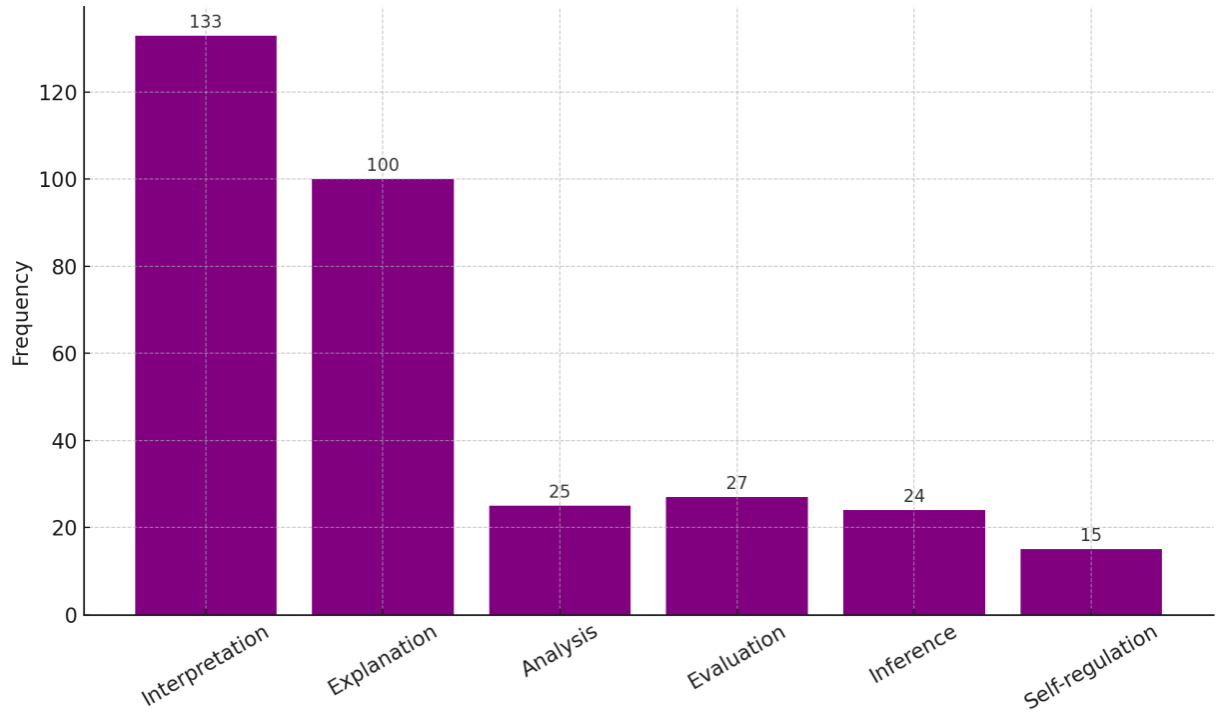
After encoding the data, the activities are classified according to Facione's six skills and compiled in an Excel spreadsheet. The data was processed using descriptive statistical methods, mainly including the frequency and percentage of each CT skill compared to the total number of activities. Pie and column charts are used to visually illustrate the analysis results.

Results and Discussion

Results

To evaluate the level of thinking skills development in the *Wonderful World 4* textbooks, the study classified and counted 324 activities according to the theoretical framework: Facione's CT Skills Framework.

Figure 2: Frequencies of CT Skills Distribution in Wonderful World 4 (Units 1–12) Facione's Framework



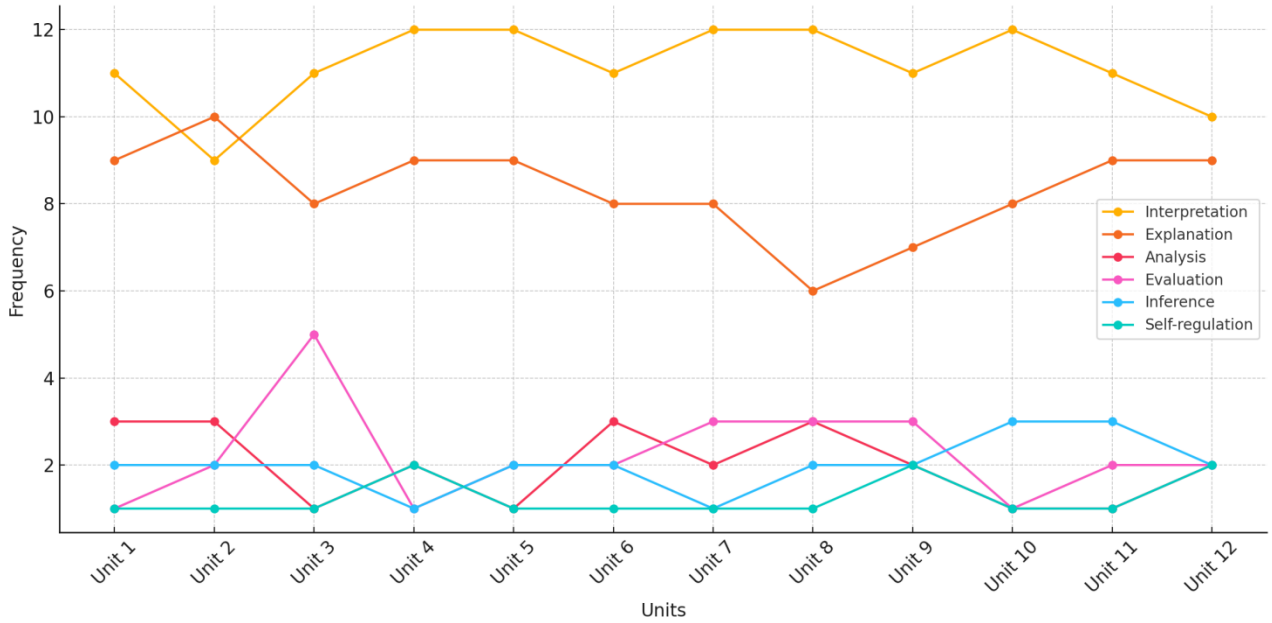
The results were presented in Figure 2 as a bar chart, illustrating the uneven distribution across different thinking levels. Out of a total of 324 analyzed learning activities, the majority focused on the two lower-order skills of Interpretation and Explanation, while higher-order skills such as Analysis, Evaluation, Inference, and especially Self-regulation appeared much less frequently. Lower-order thinking skills, particularly Interpretation and Explanation, were dominant, accounting for 41.0% (equivalent to 133 activities) and 30.9% (equivalent to 100 activities) of the total. Tasks in this group primarily require students to identify, classify, and associate vocabulary with illustrations, which is suitable for the cognitive characteristics of elementary school students but not sufficient for developing higher-order thinking.

Conversely, higher-order skills such as Analysis, Evaluation, and Inference appeared with very low frequency, accounting for only 7.7% (25 activities), 8.3% (27 activities), and 7.4% (24 activities) respectively, of the total. These activities are implemented in a fragmented manner, lacking connection between lessons, which limits opportunities for in-depth critical thinking practice.

The skill of Self-regulation was the least demonstrated, appearing in only 15 activities, accounting for 4.6% of the total. While some learning projects have the potential to promote reflection and adjustment, they often lack clear criteria, specific guidance, or peer assessment mechanisms to support students in self-evaluating and improving their learning products.

These findings suggest that, while textbooks provide a basic foundation for understanding and presenting language, they do not yet ensure the comprehensive and systematic development of higher-order critical thinking skills-which are essential for independent and lifelong learning.

Figure 3: Line Chart Showing the Frequency Distribution of CT Skills Across Units



The chart clearly demonstrates the dominance of the two skills of Understanding and Explaining. In most articles, the skill of Understanding appears 9 to 12 times, while Explaining appears 6 to 10 times. The consistent and high presence of these two skills indicates that the book primarily focuses on information recognition and presentation activities – i.e., lower-order thinking skills.

Conversely, higher-order thinking skills such as Analysis, Evaluation, Inference, and especially Self-regulation are less frequent and unevenly distributed. For example, the Evaluation skill skyrocketed in Unit 3 (5 times) but only appeared 1–3 times in the remaining lessons. Self-regulation appears 1-2 times per article, and in some articles, it only appears once. This pattern suggests that learners have fewer opportunities to practice self-reflection or self-regulation of their own thinking processes.

Although the book contains all CT skills, the significant disparity in the frequency of these skills indicates that the lesson design is biased towards lower-order skills, failing to create a balance in the holistic development of students' thinking.

Discussion

The results showed that the majority of learning activities in the books *Wonderful World 4* focus on two skills: Interpretation and Explanation, with a total percentage of up to 71.9%. This is understandable given that the target students are of elementary school age, are in the stage of forming basic language skills, and need many activities for recognition, classification, and description to develop their language foundation.

However, placing too much emphasis on lower-order cognitive skills can cause English teaching to only reach a superficial level of understanding, without providing the conditions for students to develop substantial CT. This is similar to the conclusion of Aslan and Polat (2008), when they found that most questions in Turkish primary school textbooks only reached the levels of remembering and understanding, lacking higher-order thinking requirements.

Higher-order skills such as Analysis (7.7%), Evaluation (8.3%), and Inference (7.4%) appear infrequently and are scattered, lacking coherence between lessons. The related activities are often isolated situations, more of a choice than a requirement for argumentation or critique. This result contrasted with the progress noted in the studies by Sucipto & Cahyo (2019) and Nainggolan & Wirza (2021), where they assert that modern English textbooks are actively integrating activities that require students to present viewpoints, argue, and solve problems-thereby strongly developing critical thinking skills in line with Facione's spirit.

Self-regulation is the skill with the lowest rate (4.6%) and usually only appears in end-of-lesson activities, such as Projects or personal writing assignments. However, these tasks lack clear criteria, do not include reflection guidelines or self-assessment steps, making it difficult for students to develop self-regulation habits. Moreover, the complete absence of peer-assessment activities deprives students of the opportunity to view their own work through the lens of others.

In contrast, the study by Al-Rahbi et al. (2022) in Oman recorded Self-regulation as the most integrated skill (20.81%) in the 4th-grade English textbook, highlighting a clear difference in program design orientation between countries.

Additionally, according to Nguyen & Duong (2024) -a study evaluating the *Super Minds Level 3* book-self-regulation skills, although present, have not yet been emphasized. Related activities often do not come with a reflective framework or specific assessment tools. This conclusion highlights a commonality between *Wonderful World 4* and many other English books in Vietnam: self-regulation skills are still not considered a crucial component in lesson structures, despite the 2018 GEP clearly stating the central role of self-learning and self-management competencies in the educational objectives.

The line chart shows the frequency of CT skills in each lesson. It can be seen that the distribution of skills is quite stable in the lower-order skills group (Interpretation and Explanation), but fluctuates greatly and is inconsistent in the higher-order skills group, such as Evaluation, Inference, and Self-regulation. For example, the skill of Evaluation tends to “flare up” in a few lesson units like Unit 3 and Unit 7, but is completely faint or absent in the remaining units. Similarly, Self-Regulation skills remained almost consistently at level 1 for most lessons and only appeared with higher frequency in the last two lessons (Units 9 and 12). The chart also shows a clear gap between the low-skill group and the high-skill group from the very first lessons, and this gap did not gradually narrow over time. This shows that the book does not build a skills development strategy that progresses from recognition to CT and self-regulation-which is essential in teaching thinking skills. Instead, higher-order thinking skills are integrated in a disjointed manner, lacking coherence and not supporting students' continuous development across lessons. Unlike the modern textbooks discussed in Sucipto & Cahyo's (2019) study-which integrate CT in a progressively increasing manner through activities such as projects, discussions, and problem-solving-*Wonderful World 4* does not yet demonstrate a direction for developing thinking in a progressive manner, which is an essential principle in competency-based thinking education. From a pedagogical perspective, such an approach can lead students to become accustomed to receiving and reproducing knowledge without developing the ability for independent reasoning, CT, or self-assessment of their learning process. This is a notable limitation in the context of modern education, where curricula increasingly emphasize the development of qualities and competencies rather than simply conveying content.

These findings indicate that, compared to international trends, *Wonderful World 4* still lacks a clear strategy for the comprehensive and balanced integration of CT skills. Language learning still primarily focuses on recognition, memorization, and description, without encouraging students to apply CT, reasoning, or self-regulation in the learning process.

To improve this, it is necessary to build a learning system that operates in chains, linking levels of thinking from Interpretation and Explanation to Analysis, Evaluation, and Self-Regulation. These activities should be linked to specific themes, have a clear direction, and be accompanied by support tools such as reflection frameworks, evaluation scales, or peer assessment activities. This integrated approach not only contributes to improving the effectiveness of English language teaching but also helps primary school students develop CT skills and sustainable independent learning.

Conclusion

According to Facione's (1990) CT framework, this study examined the content of the *Wonderful World 4* textbooks and identified the level of integration of thinking skills. The results show that the books overwhelmingly focus on lower-order thinking skills such as explaining and interpreting. However, higher-order skills, including evaluation, analysis, reasoning, and especially self-regulation, appear infrequently and unsystematically.

This method supports higher-order CT skills, but it still has many limitations. Research shows that teachers should actively engage in thinking-oriented learning activities, such as asking open-ended questions, analyzing situations, group discussions, and individual reflection. At the same time, textbooks designers need to shift their focus from providing information to encouraging students to think and respond through open-ended and problem-solving tasks. In addition, the study acknowledges some limitations. First, analyzing a single textbook is not sufficient to draw comprehensive conclusions about the English program in elementary school. Second, the study does not fully reflect the real-world context because it lacks empirical data from the classroom. Additionally, due to the lack of an absolute classification standard between thinking levels, coding is a subjective process.

Finally, future studies should exploit more data collection instruments, including classroom observations and content analysis. Critical thinking assessment tools need to be improved to align with the psychological and cognitive characteristics of elementary school students. Additionally, comparing book sets and using technology in teaching can open up more practical avenues for developing CT in a modern English learning environment.

References

Al-Rahbi, A. M., Al-Mekhlafi, A. M., Al-Barwani, T., & Omara, E. (2022). Challenging the status quo: Critical thinking skills integration in the EFL curriculum of young learners. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching, 11*(8), 79–88. https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v11n8p79

Aghababaeian, P., Moghaddam, S. A. H., Nateghi, F., & Faghihi, A. (2017). Investigating changes in social studies textbooks of public review (basic fourth and fifth) based on the emphasis on critical thinking skills Facione in the last three decades. *International Education Studies, 10*(3), 108–115. https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v10n3p108

Aslan, C., & Polat, D. (2008). Content analysis on primary education Turkish course books from the point of acquiring critical thinking skills. In G. T. Papanikos (Ed.), *Issues on education and research* (Vol. 1, pp. 147–160).

Baig, S., Siddiquah, A., & Javed, F. (2021). An analysis of the competency 'reading and thinking skills' in Grade VIII English textbook. *Global Social Sciences Review, 5*(1), 231–240. https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2020(V-I).24

Bassham, G., Irwin, W., Nardone, H., & Wallace, J. M. (2011). *Critical thinking: A student's introduction* (5th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Cottrell, S. (2011). *Critical thinking skills: Developing effective analysis and argument* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Cottrell, S. (2017). *Critical thinking skills* (3rd ed.). Red Globe Press.

Darmawati, D., & Mustadi, A. (2023). Enhancing students' critical thinking skills through problem-based learning in primary education. *International Journal of Instruction, 16*(1), 123–140. https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2023.1618a

Elder, L., & Paul, R. (2010). *Critical thinking: Tools for taking charge of your professional and personal life* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.

Ellis, R. (1997). The empirical evaluation of language teaching materials. *ELT Journal, 51*(1), 36–42.

Es-Salhi, A., & Elfatihi, M. (2019). Evaluating critical thinking skills in Moroccan EFL textbooks: Gateway to English 2 as a case. *Higher Education of Social Science, 17*(1), 13–22.

Facione, P. A. (1990). *Critical thinking: A statement of expert consensus for purposes of educational assessment and instruction (The Delphi Report)*. The California Academic Press.

Halpern, D. F. (2002). *Thought and knowledge: An introduction to critical thinking* (4th ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kenney, M. (2013). Teaching children to think critically. *Journal of Early Childhood Education, 41*(3), 223–230.

Latif, K., Bakri, H., & Mustapha, R. (2019). Critical thinking in accounting education: A literature review. *International Journal of Academic Research in Accounting, Finance and Management Sciences, 9*(4), 160–167.

Le, V. C. (2018). A critical analysis of moral values in Vietnam-produced EFL textbooks for upper secondary schools. In R. Marlina & R. A. Giri (Eds.), *Situating moral and cultural values in ELT materials* (pp. 111–129). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-63677-1_7

Li, L. (2016). Thinking skills and creativity in second language education: Where are we now? *Thinking Skills and Creativity, 22*, 267–272. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2016.10.003

Nguyen, B. (2017, April). *The development of critical thinking for students in Vietnamese schools: From policies to practices* ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324701442

Ng, Q. Y., & Jeyaraj, J. J. (2023). *Evaluating critical thinking elements in a secondary school English language textbook in Malaysia*. International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development, 12(2). https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v12-i2/17454

Nainggolan, B. R., & Wirza, Y. (2021). Does *English in Mind* promote critical thinking skills? *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, 546*, 51–58. https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210427.008

Nguyen, M. A., & Duong, T. H. (2024). The representation of critical thinking in the textbook *Super Minds Level 3*. *HNUE Journal of Science: Educational Sciences, 69*(4), 24–34. https://doi.org/10.18173/2354-1075.2024-0060

Nguyen, T. T. T. B. (2022). Critical thinking: What it means in a Vietnamese tertiary EFL context. *Asian EFL Journal, 26*(3), 5–23. https://doi.org/10.56498/3292632022

Paul, R. (2005). *Critical thinking: Tools for taking charge of your learning and your life* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.

Solihati, N. (2018). Critical thinking tasks manifested in Indonesian language textbooks for senior secondary students. *SAGE Open, 8*(3), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018802164

Sucipto, S., & Cahyo, S. D. (2019). A content analysis of the reading activities in *Bright 2*: An English textbook for junior high school students. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal (ELTEJ), 2*(1), 13–21. https://doi.org/10.12928/eltej.v2i1.918

Tomlinson, B. (2011). *Materials development in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.