Integrating Critical Thinking in an English Speaking Coursebook Speak Now 1 : A Bloom's Taxonomy-Based Evaluation

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Abstract: This study evaluates the integration of critical thinking skills in the Speak Now 1 English coursebook, specifically in the context of the STBA JIA Basic Speaking course. A mixed-method approach was employed, including qualitative content analysis of 32 speaking activities and a quantitative survey analysis involving 41 students. The speaking activities were analyzed using the revised Bloom's Taxonomy to determine the cognitive domains involved and the questionnaire was gauged students' views on the integration of critical thinking through frequencies and percentages. The findings revealed that all six cognitive domains were present in the coursebook with "understanding" accounting for the largest percentage, followed by "applying", and "creating" and the least prevalent domains were "evaluating" and "analyzing". Meanwhile, students displayed positive perceptions of incorporating critical thinking into the coursebook. However, the study found that the cognitive domains of speaking activities were not structured hierarchically according to a hierarchical system of the revised Bloom's Taxonomy and that higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) were underutilized. The study suggests that teachers could equip the coursebook with additional tasks targeting "analyzing" and "evaluating" domains and it highlights the importance of balancing cognitive domains in speaking coursebooks in order to promote critical thinking skills in speaking classes.
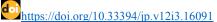
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Introduction

English coursebooks, a key element of teaching English, provide the inputs that are essential to teaching practices. A coursebook offers teaching and learning resources and guidelines to teach (Goodarzi et al., 2020), so it is designed to support teachers with ready-made materials and the outline of the course (Woodward, 2001). In addition, Haghi (2013) posits that coursebooks are used by teachers to better manage the time, while students can utilize them to achieve learning objectives. However, the plethora of coursebooks available makes selecting the most appropriate one increasingly challenging for teachers (Zhang, 2020). McGrath (2006) argues that the activities and tasks in a coursebook may be irrelevant with the classroom contexts, so modifications are needed. Given the constraints of textbook selection, evaluating coursebooks becomes a vital step to ensure the suitability of the contents with the intended learners

The primary purpose of evaluating coursebooks is to see the suitability of the coursebook with the classroom contexts (Mishan & Timmis, 2015). Cunningsworth (1995) categorizes evaluation into two purposes: evaluation for potential and evaluation for suitability. The former refers to a general evaluation without considering a specific group, while the latter focuses on assessing how well a coursebook fits a particular context. Furthermore, Tomlinson, 2012) identifies three types of coursebook evaluation based on the

timing of the assessment. The first is pre-use evaluation, which involves assessing a new coursebook to predict its potential effectiveness, and the second is whilst-use (or in-use) evaluation, carried out while the coursebook is actively being used. The last is post-use evaluation, which examines a coursebook after it has been used for a certain period to determine its impact and whether it remains suitable for future use. Most teachers conduct the evaluation after it has been used to see whether it is still appropriate for use in the future.

An English coursebook generally encompasses four language skills, categorized into receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing), along with fundamental language components including vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Among these, speaking is a central role to language learning as it encompasses interaction and communication which are fundamental in second language acquisition. As Brown (2007) and (Richards, 2008) emphasize, speaking is a major skill for students who target to achieve communicative competence in English. However, in EFL situations like Indonesia, some learners frequently find it difficult to gain speaking proficiency. According to Brown and Lee (2015), learners often encounter difficulties with clustering (grouping words into phrases), redundancy, reduced forms (e.g., contractions, elisions), performance variables (hesitations, false starts), colloquial language, rate of delivery, prosodic features (stress, rhythm, and intonation), and the dynamic nature of interaction. Ahmed (2018) reports that anxiety, lack of confidence and motivation, and limited knowledge of vocabulary are the factors that hinder ESL learners to speak. Other difficulties such as shyness and technological issues also could be the hurdles for learners (Adickalam & Yunus, 2022). This motivates teachers in EFL countries to develop strategies that can help students become more proficient speakers while lowering the barriers.

To address the barriers in learning speaking, integrating critical thinking into the classroom can be beneficial for language learners. Chaffee (2012) describes critical thinking as a cognitive process aimed at clarifying understanding and making wiser decisions. In addition, Dummett and Hughes (2021) state that it is a process of discovering the truth whether it is fully, partially, or not at all. Halpern (2003) also asserts critical thinking is an intentional, goal-oriented process that combines reflective and reasoning techniques. In essence, despite its varying definitions, critical thinking is considered as a complex process which involves many elements such as clarifying, decision-making, discovering, reasoning, and reflection. Activities that encourage critical thinking such as role plays and discussions can develop students' speaking proficiency and develop their critical thinking skills (Katemba & Grace, 2023; Latif et al., 2018).

Researchers have put up a variety of arguments for the advantages of critical thinking in language acquisition. Critical thinking exercises are thought to foster media literacy, information literacy, visual literacy, and multicultural literacy, all of which enhance students' ability to communicate effectively and constructively (Dummett & Hughes, 2021). These skills are vital in the 21st century as technology has significantly pushed learners to access the internet and information. In a classroom context, through critical thinking, learners not only receive information, but also process it critically. In terms of language skills, it is reported that report that integrating critical thinking in teaching practices could enhance not only students' critical thinking skills but also their speaking skills (Muhammadiyeva et al., 2020). This elucidates how critical thinking skills support learners in their language development and how it is operationalized in English coursebooks is important.

Critical thinking has been classified into different types. Thomas and Lok (2015) characterize critical thinking into three attributes comprising critical thinking skills,

dispositions, and knowledge. Three fundamental components of critical thinking are identified by another paradigm, such as the Cambridge Life Competencies paradigm: comprehending and analyzing concepts and arguments, assessing concepts and arguments, and resolving issues and reaching conclusions (Cambridge, 2000), while the most frequently adopted framework is Bloom's Taxonomy and Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (Soe, 2024). The revised Bloom Taxonomy divides the critical thinking framework into higher order thinking skills (HOTS) that involve creating, evaluating, and analyzing, and lower order thinking skills (LOTS) that involve applying, understanding, and remembering (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). LOTS engage with the foundational skills which are necessary for comprehension in the basic level such as the ability to recall factual information or concepts, understand the meaning of information by interpreting it, and use the materials which have been learnt in a new situation. Meanwhile, HOTS involve more complex areas such as the ability to break down information and find the themes, make judgments according to the standards through evaluation, and generate new ideas or create products by using the knowledge from different sources. Bloom's Revised Taxonomy is not only used for developing curriculum but also a compass for meaningful learning and critical thinking. The framework of the revised Bloom's Taxonomy promotes critical thinking by encouraging learners to progress beyond memorization, situated in the lowest domain, C1.

In line with the urgency of integrating critical thinking in the English coursebook, the policy of the government of Indonesia (as stipulated in Permendikbudristek No. 53 of 2023) also underscores the competencies possessed by higher education graduates, including critical thinking. This reflects how critical thinking skills must be incorporated into curriculum design and teaching practices, and it should be introduced in higher education (Lincoln & Kearney, 2019), and coursebooks appear to be the main resources to attain these skills. This clearly indicates the need to have a well-designed coursebook that equip students with critical thinking activities to enhance their speaking skills and prepare them for real-world contexts.

Nevertheless, many have found the English coursebooks which emphasize practicing the linguistic features such as grammar over fostering the critical thinking (Tomlinson, 2012). Consequently, teacher-centred and accuracy-oriented becomes the preferred lessons to teach even in speaking classroom (Gandeel, 2016). Students are expected to memorize grammar rules and apply them into speaking activities. The major influence of this practice is the teachers' belief that teaching explicit grammar is essential to scaffolding students' language proficiency (Tiwari, 2023). These practices lack of activities which promotes critical thinking, so they fail to encourage learners in critical discussion (Richards, 2006). Hence, research on a coursebook evaluation to assess the extent to which critical thinking skills are integrated becomes important.

Currently, a few researchers have also discovered how critical thinking was incorporated into the coursebooks in different contexts. Fakhrillah and Suharyadi (2025) examined how the English textbook "English for Nusantara" for Grade VII demonstrated both HOTS and LOTS including the exercises and tasks for listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills, and the results showed that the coursebook put a heavy emphasis on LOTS. Moreover, Ng and Jeyaraj (2023) examined the textbook English Download B1+ used in secondary schools nationwide in Malaysia with Cambridge Assessment Taxonomy of Critical Thinking and revealed that it incorporated the critical thinking activities and dispositions, though it was suggested to vary the tasks for teaching the language skills. While in Morocco, Es-Salhi and Elfatihi (2019) evaluated the coursebook EFL Textbook Gateway to English 2 following Bloom's Taxonomy framework and unveiled that it was only designed for lower

order thinking skills, so they suggested to complete the coursebook with activities that fostered critical thinking.

Among the previous studies, it was found that very few discussing the coursebook evaluation to examine how critical thinking is fused in English speaking coursebooks. Besides, addressing the issues of coursebooks in higher education have received little attention from previous researchers. Furthermore, most studies did not include students' voices which have a significant input in evaluating the coursebook. Therefore, this research attempted to address the gap by focusing on how critical thinking was incorporated in the English speaking coursebook Speak Now 1 in the STBA JIA Basic Speaking course and the students' views on how the coursebook incorporated critical thinking.

Research Method

This study employed a mixed-method approach, including qualitative and quantitative methods. A content analysis was undertaken to examine the incorporation of critical thinking into the coursebook Speak Now 1. According to Elango and Kumaravel (2022), content analysis is a way of evaluating documented data by examining the text's content and generating logical inferences from it. Moreover, Aksoy (2022) emphasizes that the main objective of content analysis is to analyze expressions and relationships that clarify the data acquired. To strengthen the data generated from the analysis of coursebook, this study also searched for the students' perspectives on its integration through a Likert-scale questionnaire with quantitative data.

The authors adapted the instrument from Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) to evaluate the coursebook which classifies the critical thinking into six cognitive domains: remembering (C1), understanding (C2), applying (C3), analyzing (C4), evaluating (C5), and creating (C6). The coursebook consists of eight topics (new friends, interests, people, daily life, my hometown, shopping, food, and past & future) and each topic includes four lessons, so there are 32 lessons in total. Each unit is presented with vocabulary, conversations, language booster, listening, pronunciation, and speaking activities. This study evaluated the 32 speaking activities, and to see the LOTS and HOTS activities, the checklist table was carefully designed following the framework of the revised Bloom's Taxonomy. In addition to it, this research also involved students in Basic Speaking class who used Speak Now 1 as the coursebook at Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing JIA in Bekasi. Basic Speaking serves as an initial practice for students, aiming to build their communication skills. The total number of participants was 41 aged 18 – 25 years old, consisting of a mixture of male and female students.

To analyze the integration of critical thinking associated with the speaking activities in the English coursebook Speak Now 1, the researchers carefully examined and classified referring to the revised Bloom's Taxonomy levels: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating (C1 – C6). This category allowed for a detailed assessment of the cognitive demands of each speaking activity, distinguishing between LOTS and HOTS. The frequency and distribution of LOTS and HOTS speaking activities were then compared to find out the extent to which each textbook promotes critical thinking skills. To validate the results of this evaluation, the researchers distributed a Likert-scale questionnaire to students who experienced using the coursebook. They were expected to respond to nine statements with strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree where statements had been translated into Bahasa Indonesia to prevent

misunderstandings. The data were analyzed quantitatively by calculating the frequencies and percentages for each item in a clustered column chart.

Results and Discussion

To evaluate the coursebook, it was seen through the lens of the content of the coursebook which includes 32 speaking activities.

Table 1. The Speaking Activities in the Coursebook Speak Now 1

Unit	Lesson	Cognitive Domain
1	1	Remembering
	2	Understanding
	3	Applying
	4	Applying
2	5	Understanding
	6	Applying
	7	Remembering
	8	Applying
3	9	Understanding
	10	Understanding
	11	Understanding
	12	Analyzing
4	13	Applying
	14	Remembering
	15	Understanding
	16	Creating
5	17	Evaluating
	18	Evaluating
	19	Analyzing
	20	Applying
6	21	Creating
	22	Creating
	23	Understanding
	24	Remembering
7	25	Applying
	26	Creating
	27	Understanding
	28	Understanding
8	29	Applying
	30	Evaluating
	31	Creating
	32	Creating

Table 2. The Distribution of Cognitive Domains

Cognitive Domain	Percentage
Remembering (C1)	13%
Understanding (C2)	28%
Applying (C3)	25%
Analyzing (C4)	6%
Evaluating (C5)	9%
Creating (C6)	19%

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Based on Tables 1 and 2 above, the speaking activities in the coursebook Speak Now 1 involved six cognitive domains based on the revised Bloom's Taxonomy. The researchers grouped the speaking activities according to their cognitive domains. As seen, the cognitive domains in the coursebook were not arranged in order from the lowest level (C1) to the highest (C6); instead, they were presented in a random order. The highest cognitive domain was C2 or "understanding" (28%) with nine activities belong to this domain. C2 was placed in Lessons 2, 5, 9, 10, 11, 15, 23, 27, and 28. The lessons focus on explaining ideas and demonstrating comprehension such as *What kind of personalities do you think these people need? Write two words for each person* (lesson 10). The second highest cognitive level was C3 (applying) with only 3% difference (25%) from C2. C3 refers to how learners apply the knowledge in new situations, for instance, *Walk around the class and ask your classmates if they do any of the activities below. Try to find different people each activity* (lesson 13). It can be found in Lessons 3, 4, 6, 8,13, 20, 25, and 29. Surprisingly, the coursebook incorporated C6 (creating), which is the highest level of cognitive domain, with the total of 19% in Lessons 16, 21, 22, 26, 31, and 32. This domain concentrates on generating ideas or products, for example, *Prepare to talk about a trip you took. Answer the questions below* (Lesson 31).

Three lowest cognitive domains were C1, C4, and C5. C1 covered 13% in the coursebook placed in Lessons 1, 7, 14, and 34. This lowest cognitive domain engages basic knowledge to recall learned information such as *Study Charlie's appointments. Then cover the picture and take turns asking about his appointments. What can you remember?* (Lesson 7). Three Lessons belonged to C5 (evaluating) in Lessons 17, 18, and 30. This domain deals with the skill to make judgment with various classroom speaking activities like *Complete the tasks below. Role-play the conversations. Finish your conversation with, "Thanks. I'll think about it." Then, change your roles* (Lesson 17). The cognitive domain with the least percentage was C4 (analyzing). As presented, it included only 2 Lessons (12 and 19). C4 entails the lessons which allow learners to identify patterns or relationships.

As discussed, the result of the coursebook evaluation through the analysis of speaking activities in the coursebook Speak Now 1 by using the revised Bloom's Taxonomy claim that the coursebook integrated all six cognitive domains from C1 to C6, reflecting a varied approach to developing students' critical thinking skills. This also proves that the coursebook not merely focus on LOTS (lower-order thinking skills) but also attempts to engage learners in HOTS (higher-order thinking skills).

At 28%, the largest percentage of activities were classified as C2 (understanding). This suggests that the coursebook emphasizes comprehension tasks, such as explaining ideas and demonstrating understanding. It contends that comprehension come before production, requiring that language learners comprehend the language before they can use it successfully. Thus, in order to facilitate language acquisition, comprehension tasks must be emphasized. The speaking activity such as *What kind of personalities do you think these people need?* requires learners to internalize and articulate meaning, aligning with communicative teaching goals (Richards, 2006).

At 25%, C3 (applying) came in second, suggesting that learners are regularly expected to employ language in contextualized contexts. The activity like *Walk around the class and ask your classmates* points out the practice usage of previously learned language in real contexts. This reflects experiential learning principles which spotlights the role of active participation and context in language acquisition.

Unexpectedly, C6 (creating) made up a substantial 19% of the activities. Activities that fell under this category, such as *Prepare to talk about a trip you took encourage and scaffold learners' autonomy and creativity*. This supports the claim of Brown and Lee (2015), who highlight the value of allowing students to use the language and communicate their ideas in order to boost motivation and engagement. On the other hand, C4 (analyzing) appeared the least, at only 6%, while C1 (remembering) and C5 (evaluating) only made up 13% and 9%, respectively. These results suggest that the coursebook. The restricted availability of C4 and C5 activities implies that learners have less opportunity to critically engage with language input, such as comparing, contrasting, or forming well-informed judgments, even while C1-level activities (such as appointments and timetables) provide fundamental language recall. Moreover, the distribution of cognitive domains was not structured in a progressive order from C1 to C6. This random sequencing might miss the opportunity to scaffold cognitive complexity effectively across the course. Learners may benefit more from a more organized integration of cognitive areas as they progressively improve their cognitive and language skills.

Although Speak Now 1 makes a good attempt to include higher-order thinking into speaking exercises, the results indicate that there is room for pedagogical development due to the random ordering and sparse use of particular domains. Teachers should supplement current materials with extra tasks that encourage analysis and evaluation, and coursebook producers could think about creating problems that more methodically balance all cognitive domains. Coursebook designers might consider designing activities that balance all cognitive domains more systematically, and teachers could complement existing materials with additional tasks that foster analysis and evaluation.

The second finding was to gain insights into students' perspectives, a questionnaire adapted from Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) was administered to 41 students (see Table 3). The instrument consists of nine items designed to measure the cognitive processes embedded in the coursebook activities, covering the same categories as used in the previous finding. Each item employs a five-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neither Agree nor Disagree (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The responses were analyzed quantitatively by calculating the percentages for each item.

Table 3. The Items of Questionnaire

Questionnaire Item	Statement
1	The textbook Speak Now 1 encourages critical thinking.
2	The speaking activities encourage cooperation between passive and active learners.
3	The activities in the textbook encourage each learner to freely express her or his own opinion in the classroom.
4	The textbook allows learners to produce or retrieve definitions, facts, or lists, or to recite previously learned information.
5	The textbook allows learners to construct meaning from different types of functions like interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, or explaining.
6	The textbook allows learners to carry out or use a procedure through executing, or implementing.
7	The textbook allows learners to break materials or concepts into parts, determine how the parts relate to one another or how they interrelate, or how the parts relate to an overall structure or purpose.

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| 8 | The textbook allows learners to make judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing. |
| 9 | The textbook allows learners to put elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganize elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning, or producing. |

Table 4. The Responses of the Questionnaire

Questionnaire Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	12%	78%	10%	0	0
2	71%	27%	2%	0	0
3	49%	49%	2%	0	0
4	22%	76%	2%	0	0
5	17%	81%	2%	0	0
6	24%	66%	10%	0	0
7	17%	76%	7%	0	0
8	10%	80%	10%	0	0
9	10%	80%	10%	0	0

As seen from the tables above, the finding revealed consistently positive perspectives toward the integration of critical thinking in the coursebook, supporting the first finding. A majority of students (78%) agreed that critical thinking was encouraged in the coursebook. In addition, most of the respondents (71%) strongly agreed that both active and passive learners were encouraged to work together, indicating the coursebook supports comprehension and collaboration. In the coursebook, learners also had a room to express their own opinion (49% strongly agree and agree), which is important to demonstrate critical thinking.

Item 4 discusses the revised Bloom's Taxonomy level 1 (remembering), and the finding shows that the coursebook facilitated knowledge recall or the ability to retrieve definitions, facts, or lists, or to recite previously learned information (76% agree). Besides, 81% agreed that the coursebook enabled learners to construct meaning from different types of functions which is categorized as the understanding layer in the revised Bloom's Taxonomy (see item 5). This category engages the skill to explain ideas or concepts. 66% of learners also perceived that the coursebook enabled them to apply knowledge in real-world situations which is defined as the applying skill in the revised Bloom's Taxonomy.

Three higher levels in the revised Bloom's Taxonomy are analyzing, evaluating, and creating which are grouped as HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills). As indicated by the data, the respondents agreed (76%) that the coursebook allowed them to analyze information by breaking it into components and identifying the relationships among them. Moreover, the coursebook provided the learners an opportunity to make judgments and evaluations (80% agree). Similarly, the survey reported that 80% of the learners agreed that the coursebook gave them support in reorganizing and developing into a new pattern which belongs to the top level of the revised Bloom's Taxonomy (creating).

The finding of this survey unveils that the students had positive perspectives regarding the integration of critical thinking into the coursebook Speak Now 1 in Basic Speaking class. The result suggests that the coursebook not only grapples with the linguistic forms required for developing speaking skills but also deals with learners in higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). This differs from the views expressed by Tomlinson (2012) and Richards (2006) who argued that many coursebooks gave little attention to critical thinking. The result also contradicts

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with Es-Salhi and Elfatihi (2019) who evaluated the coursebook EFL Textbook Gateway to English 2 framing Bloom's Taxonomy framework and discovered that the coursebook was designed for lower order thinking skills.

According to the responses, A particularly strong response was recorded to the second item (71% strongly agree) of the questionnaire. This shows that the coursebook promotes collaboration between students with higher and lower English proficiency. This is similar to the theory of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978). The theory explains that social interaction can stimulate learning to happen through collaboration of more capable students with less capable ones.

Furthermore, the result demonstrates that the coursebook not only cultivates lower order thinking skills, but also addresses the higher order thinking skills. This indicates that it provides a balanced development of cognitive skills which are beneficial in fostering analytical, evaluative, and creative capacities among learners in higher education (Facione, 2011; Zohar, 2003). Overall, based on the findings of the research, the data denote that the coursebook Speak Now 1 incorporates elements of critical thinking across multiple cognitive levels from both lower and higher order thinking skills. Conceptually, these findings support the relevance of Bloom's revised taxonomy as a framework for assessing cognitive depth in language learning materials, particularly in EFL contexts. Practically, this study highlights the need for educators and material developers to ensure a balanced representation of all cognitive domains, especially by enhancing tasks that develop higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing and evaluating.

Conclusion
The findings of this study show that the coursebook Speak Now 1 incorporated all six cognitive domains from C1 (remembering) to C6 (creating), reflecting the intention of the coursebook designers to support both LOTS and HOTS. The questionnaire responses elicited from the students of Basic Speaking class display a positive perception regarding the proportion of critical thinking in the coursebook. This suggests that the learners believed the coursebook facilitates the activities and encourages them to explore how to think critically. Moreover, the analysis of 32 speaking activities shows that while C2 (understanding) and C3 (applying) are most frequently targeted, C6 (creating) also has a significant presence. However, C4 (analyzing) and C5 (evaluating) appear less often, and the sequence of cognitive tasks are not arranged from LOTS to HOTS. This lack of hierarchical system might hinder opportunities for students to develop their critical thinking skills.

Recommendation
Higher order thinking skills (HOTS) were found to be underutilized, and the cognitive domains were not organized in a systematic manner following the revised Bloom's Taxonomy format. It is suggested that teachers can add more assignments to the coursebook that focus on the "analyzing" and "evaluating" domains by designing speaking tasks that require students to compare and contrast ideas or critique different viewpoints. Group discussions and debates can be effective activities that encourage students to develop critical thinking skills and the ability to use the language meaningfully.

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