

An Analytical Study of Exercises in Secondary English Textbooks published by NCERT with reference to Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

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Abstract

The present study analyses the exercises found in the NCERT English textbooks for secondary school students based on the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (RBT). The sample of the study consisted of 1119 end-of-chapter exercises in Class IX and Class X English textbooks. A study analysis sheet was prepared and used for classification of the questions in both the cognitive process and knowledge dimensions. The results revealed the following: most of the questions (74.14%) were within the first two levels—remembering (26.27%) and understanding (47.90%), which reflected the preponderance of lower level questions in the investigated textbooks. The study also found the dominance of exercises testing factual knowledge (61.40%) in the knowledge dimension of the RBT. Based on the findings it is recommended that textbook writers and educators include higher order questions within curriculum and pedagogy to help improve critical thinking among learners.

INTRODUCTION

The demonstration of curriculum occurs in many forms, one of which is the textbook. It dictates in many instances what the curriculum and

instruction will be and teachers rely greatly on it as the basis of instruction and assessment. It is therefore, important to examine the content and exercises in the textbooks and see

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how they bring out the development of learners' critical thinking ability. Among the different existing taxonomies and models for textbook evaluation, Bloom's Taxonomy of learning objectives can be considered one of the most effective tools. The Taxonomy was proposed by Benjamin Bloom in 1956 following the conversations held at the American Psychological Association (1948). It is a classification of different objectives and skills that educators set for students, which propose that any instructional task stimulates one of the three psychological domains: cognitive, affective or psychomotor. One criticism about Bloom's taxonomy was that both the 'knowing what' and 'knowing how' aspects of the knowledge category were treated as a single entity. To address the limitations, during the

1990s', a former student of Bloom's, Lorin Anderson, led a new assembly that updated the taxonomy introduced made with several significant changes and was published as the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (RBT) in 2001.

The RBT now identifies both—the kind of knowledge to be learned (knowledge dimension) and the kind of learning expected from students (cognitive processes). The 'knowing what' was classified into four levels, namely Factual, Conceptual, Procedural and Meta-cognitive. The 'knowing how' or cognitive processes were categorised as Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analysing, Evaluating and Creating. The revised taxonomy table along with descriptions of the knowledge and cognitive domain are shown in Table 1 and Figures 1 and 2.

Table 1
The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy table as proposed by Anderson et al. (2001)

Knowledge Dimension	Cognitive Process Dimension					
	Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyse	Evaluate	Create
Factual Knowledge						
Factual Knowledge						
Factual Knowledge						
Factual Knowledge						

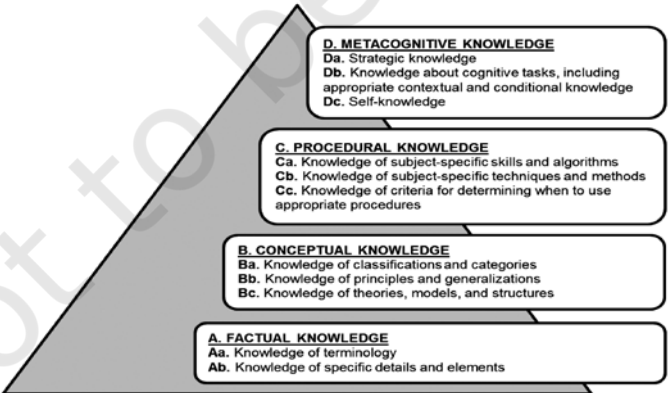


Fig. 1 RBT Knowledge Dimension as presented in Anderson et al. (2001)
Source: <http://www.kamts1.kpi.ua/en/node/2422>

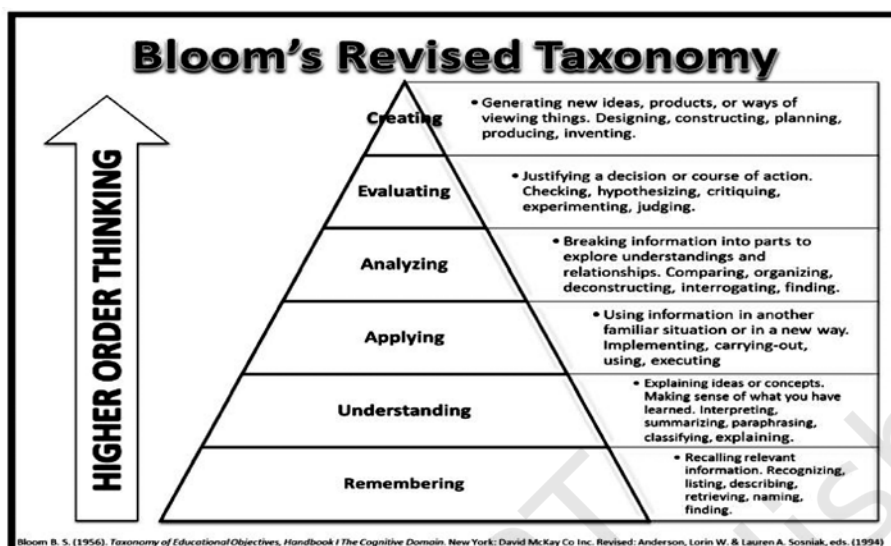


Fig. 2: RBT Cognitive Domain as proposed by Anderson et al. (2001)

Source: <http://discuss.cle.ust.hk/mediawiki/images/4/43/Revised.jpg>

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The National Focus Group on Teaching of English (NCF 2005) mentions that the objectives of language teaching is not limited to the development of the four fundamental skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) but also extends to the development of thinking skills of students. It states that 'Language in education would ideally and ordinarily build on such naturally acquired language ability, enriching it through the development of literacy into an instrument for abstract thought and the acquisition of academic knowledge. We can then speak of a 'cognitive academic linguistic proficiency' (cf. Cummins, 1979) as language and thinking skills that build on the basis of a child's spontaneous knowledge of language. This is a goal of language education, and acquiring education through language.'

In order to achieve the objectives thus mentioned, the exercises and activities that follow each lesson in a textbook then become of great importance and should be written in a way that helps in attaining the educational objectives and develop critical thinking, creativity and reasoning skills of the learners. Chadwick (2013) views questions as an integral part in teaching children to think critically and creatively. Furthermore, for effective instructions to take place in class, Jones et al. (2009) and Swart (2010) consider questions as an important part of the instructional process.

English textbooks come with a lot of questions. However, unfortunately, studies have found that most textbook questions emphasise only the lower-order cognitive levels and do not include questions that

require critical thinking and meta-cognitive processes (Razmjoo and Kazempourfard, 2012; Abdelrahman, 2014; Alfaki, 2014; Askaripour, 2014). The present study is, therefore, taken up to analyse the exercises in the English textbooks published by NCERT (2006) and find out if it fulfills the objectives of teaching English as stated in the NCF 2005, or whether the exercises merely encourage lower levels of thinking. Since no such study has been taken up in the State and most probably in the country so far, the attempt to conduct a study in this area will, undoubtedly, fill up this research gap and also serve as a tool for future curriculum designers and textbook writers in preparation of textbooks and ensure 'cognitive academic linguistic proficiency' through the textbooks.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In a study conducted by Razmjoo and Kazempourfard (2012) on the four course books of Interchange Third Edition series (Richards 2005), questions testing the ability to remember factual knowledge (A1) were found to be most frequent, followed by the application of conceptual knowledge (C2). Interestingly, no exercises for testing of remembering, understanding and evaluating metacognitive knowledge were present in the textbooks. Exercises testing Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) was most prevalent in these books. Similarly, Rahmawati and Prayogo (2017) also found that out of 279 reading questions in English Textbook titled

Interlanguage: English for Senior High School Students XI, questions testing lower-order thinking had higher occurrence than higher-order thinking exercises.

Dabbagh and Safaei (2019) analysed Iranian nationwide ELT textbooks, i.e. Prospect and Vision series, and compared them to the internationally-published textbook *Four Corners* and found higher representation of LOTS (92.94%) compared to HOTS (7.06%) in the exercises of *Prospect and Vision* series while *Four Corners* textbooks provided a balanced representation regarding LOTS (59.22%) and HOTS (40.78%).

Mizbani, Salehi and Tabatabaei (2020) evaluated all 127 activities of the textbook of *Vision 1*, the textbook of *Senior High School, Grade 1*, where activities for the development of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) showed the dominance of exercises, that belonged to lower levels of the thinking process.

Moreover, studies conducted by Abdelrahman (2014), Alfaki (2014), Askaripour (2014), Roohaniet et al. (2014), Sinabutar (2017), Putri and Komariah (2018) and Murid (2019) on various English language textbooks also found similar results, where the lower-order cognitive skill exercises constituted a larger proportion compared to higher-order cognitive skill exercises.

OBJECTIVES

- (i) To find out and compare the distribution of exercises in Classes IX and X English

Textbooks based on the Cognitive Process Domain of RBT.

- (ii) To examine the distribution of exercises into Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) and Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS).
- (iii) To classify and compare the distribution of exercises in Classes IX and X English Textbooks based on the Knowledge Dimension of RBT.
- (iv) To analyse the distribution of exercises in Classes IX and X English textbooks based on the Knowledge Dimension and Cognitive Process Domain.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study primarily involves document analysis. In this type of research method, written or visual material are analysed for the purpose of identifying specified characteristics of the material (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh and Serensen, 2006). Further, Revised Bloom's Taxonomy was used as a benchmark to analyse the data.

Material

This study covers all the exercises in Classes IX and X English textbooks published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), India. Below is the list of textbooks under study:

- (a) *Beehive* — Textbook in English for Class IX
- (b) *Moments* — Supplementary reader in English for Class IX

(c) *First Flight* — Textbook in English for Class X

(d) *Footprints without Feet* — Supplementary reader in English for Class X

Data collection and analysis procedure

The study employed amixed method using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The data for this study, i.e. exercises and activities were identified and categorised using a coding scheme based on the RBT. They were tallied and analysed according to the appropriate cognitive and knowledge dimension to find out the frequency and percentage of occurrence at each level of cognitive domain as well as knowledge domain.

Examples of analysis procedure from selected exercises in Class X English textbook may be shown as follows:

- (a) What does being free mean to Mandela as a boy and as a student? How does he contrast these 'transitory freedoms' with 'the basic and honourable freedoms'? (Pg. 24)
- (b) Here are a few more idiomatic expressions that occur in the text. Try to use them in sentences of your own. (Pg. 57)
- (c) Read the last stanza. Do you think Amanda is sulking and is moody? (Pg. 62)
- (d) Can you imagine what these characters will quarrel about next? (Pg. 157)

Example A would be categorised in the Understanding Level as it requires the students to understand and explain the idea of ‘being free’ in the life of Mandel a and contrast ‘transitory freedoms’ with ‘the basic and honourable freedoms’ in the context of the lesson. Furthermore, since the exercise tests the students’ knowledge of the text at both literal and interpretive level in order to make meaning within the context, the type of knowledge dimension it would involve is Conceptual Knowledge.

Example B can be labeled under Applying Level and also involves Procedural Knowledge. It requires the knowledge of the steps and rules in the use of idiomatic expressions, which the learner is expected to apply in making new sentences.

Example C can be labeled under Evaluating Level and also involves Metacognitive Knowledge. The learner is asked to evaluate and

decide whether ‘Amanda is sulking and is moody?’. Also, since the students are required to reflect on what they understand with regard to the thoughts and moods of Amanda, it may be aptly categorised under the Metacognitive Knowledge Dimension.

Example D can be labeled under Creating Level as the students are required to design a new content out of their own imagination. Also, since students have to perform the cognitive task of thinking about how the quarrel between the characters in the play may proceed, thus helping them become more aware of their own thinking process, the exercise can be categorised under the Metacognitive Knowledge Dimension in the RBT.

The same procedure was carried out in the analysis and categorisation of all the 1119 exercises in Classes IX and X English Textbooks.

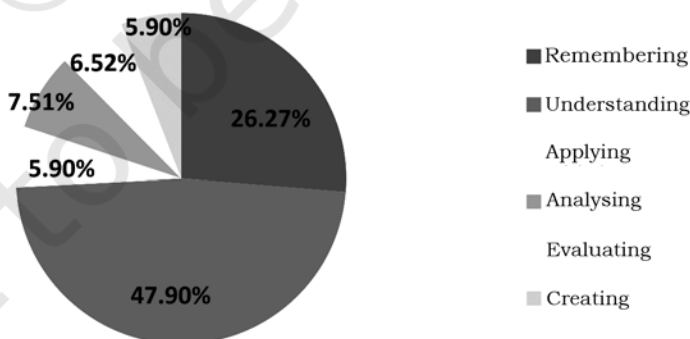


Fig. 3 Distribution of exercises in Classes IX and X English textbooks based on the Cognitive Process Domain

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Figure 3 reveals that out of a total of 1119 exercises in Classes IX and X textbooks, the highest percentage in the Cognitive Process Dimension is found in Understanding Level followed by Remembering, Analysing, Evaluating, Creating and Applying Levels.

The secondary school English textbook is highly concentrated on remembering and understanding levels in the cognitive domain covering 74.17% out of the total number of exercises. This reveals the inadequacy of the exercises in textbooks for the enhancement of cognitive ability of the students to perform more complex cognitive tasks and the lack of provision for the development of complex thinking skills through the activities given in their textbooks.

Figure 4 shows that in both Classes IX and X English textbooks, the highest percentage of exercises was found in Understanding Level followed

by Remembering Level. However, variation is seen in the frequency of the exercises in the remaining levels where least frequently occurring exercise in Class IX textbooks goes for Creating Level while Class X textbooks have Applying level questions as its least occurring exercises.

The results revealed that all the levels in the cognitive domain of RBT are present in the exercises of Class IX and X English textbooks. Although activities related to remembering and understanding were more apparent in the textbooks of both classes with a measurable increase in the number of exercises in the higher cognitive levels in Class X textbook. This suggests that with the progression from Class IX to X, and assumed increase in the cognitive proficiency of learners, the level of difficulty of the exercises in the textbooks has also progressed, which is supposedly expected to aid in the development

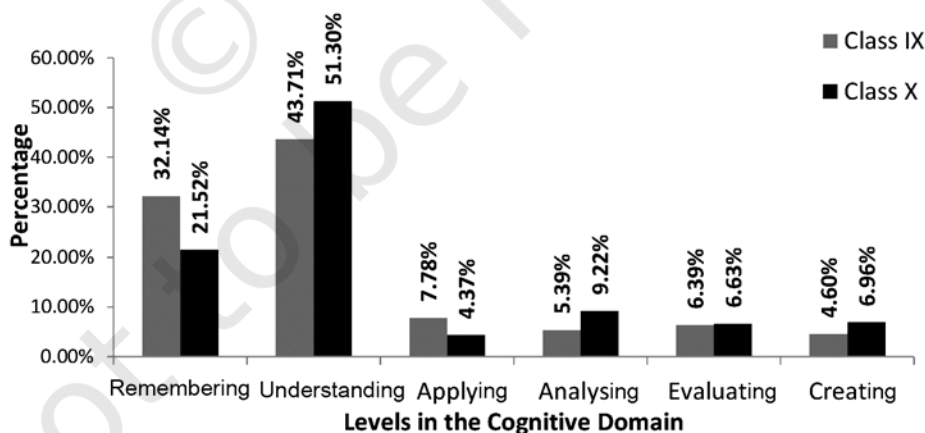


Fig. 4 Comparative analysis of the exercises in Classes IX and X English Textbooks based on the Cognitive Process Domain

of the cognitive ability and thinking skills of the learners.

Distribution of exercises into Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) and Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)

Classifying the six levels of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy into 'lower' and 'higher' order cognitive skills wherein Remembering, Understanding and Applying level were categorised as LOTS and Analysing, Evaluating and Creating Levels as HOTS, the distribution of exercises in LOTS and HOTS and their progression in Class IX and X textbooks is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5 shows that in LOTS category, a slight decrease in the distribution of exercises is seen from 83.63% in Class IX to 77.18% in Class X textbooks. Contrary to this, under HOTS category, a slight increase is seen in the percentage of exercises from 16.37% in Class IX textbooks to 22.82% in Class X. Analysis of exercises of both Class IX and X combined found most of the exercises under LOTS category (80.07%),

whereas a minimal number is found in the HOTS category (19.93%).

Discussion: Data analysis yields a high percentage of textbook activities devoted to LOTS while HOTS have not received any substantial contribution. This finding is similar to studies taken up by Askaripour (2014), Putri and Komariah (2018) and Murid (2019). This shortage of HOTS and lack of practice, there of, might result in learners' inability to become autonomous in the process of language learning, thus preventing them from reaching the upper levels of RBT.

Figure 6 reveals the results of analysis of the overall distribution of exercises of Classes IX and X textbooks in the different levels of Knowledge Dimension. The results showed that a majority of the exercises in Secondary level English textbooks call for Factual knowledge (61.39%), followed by Conceptual Knowledge (17.60%), Metacognitive Knowledge (12.78%) and Procedural Knowledge (8.22%).

Discussion: Higher concentration on factual knowledge questions may

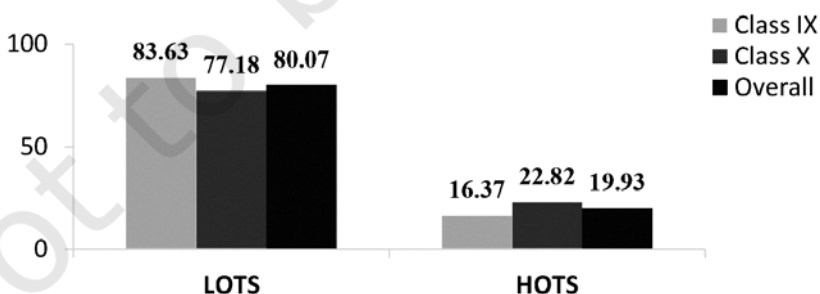


Fig. 5 Distribution of exercises from lower to higher levels in Classes IX and X English textbooks

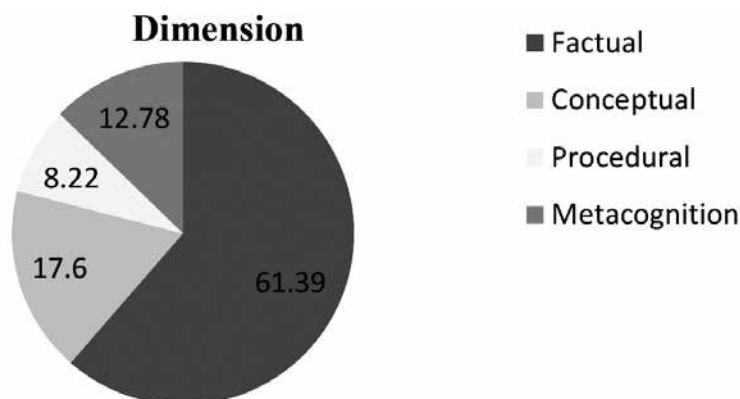


Fig. 6 Distribution of exercises in Class IX and X English textbooks based on the Knowledge Dimension of RBT

not be necessary for students at the secondary level as they are capable of thinking beyond things that are factual. They may be trained to apply learnt knowledge in new situations and even have an understanding of their thought process to make decisions and judgments that are reasonable and objective. However, the exercises in the present textbooks are still found to be highly concentrated in Factual knowledge, which implies that opportunities for students to explore beyond and employ their metacognitive knowledge is through the exercises in the textbooks. The exercises in these textbooks need to be required to help students make progress in their ability to think from the concrete and the factual stage to the abstract and to more intellectual stage.

Figure 7 shows that in Classes IX and X textbooks, a majority of the exercises are on factual information, whereas questions on procedural knowledge are found the least. While

in Class IX textbooks, we find more conceptual knowledge questions compared to questions demanding metacognitive knowledge, which is a reverse case in Class X textbooks, where there are more metacognitive questions compared to questions requiring conceptual knowledge.

Discussion: Analysis of the exercises found that both textbooks have given much focus on factual knowledge questions, which is the lowest level in the Knowledge Dimension of the RBT. Also, Class X textbooks are found to have lower concentration of questions in terms of Conceptual and Procedural Knowledge compared to Class IX textbooks, where a higher percentage of questions is found in the Metacognitive Knowledge level. A balanced representation of all the levels is not witnessed and the progression from the lowest to the highest level does not follow any specific pattern, which is an important issue that needs to be

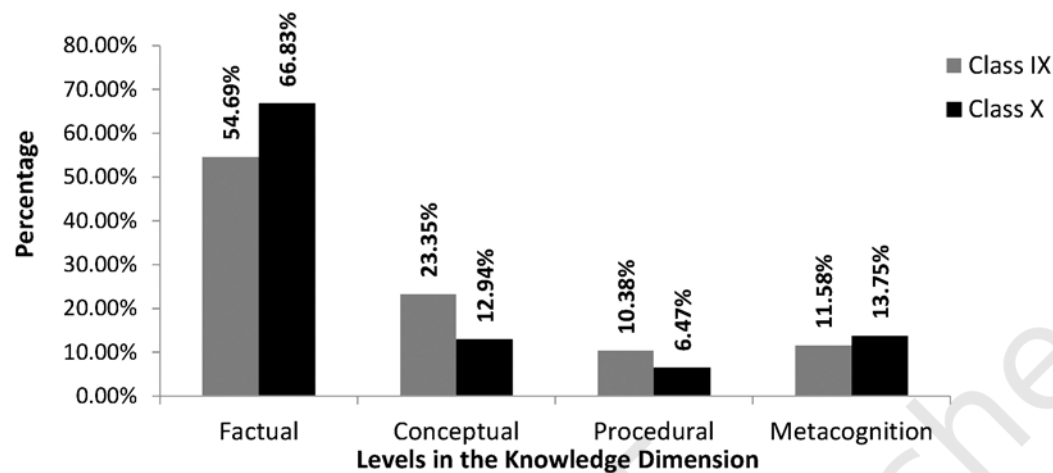


Fig. 7 Distribution of exercises in Classes IX and X English textbooks based on the Knowledge Dimension

addressed so as to enable students to think beyond facts and move towards understanding their own cognitive-style as well as their ability.

Analysis of distribution of exercises in Class IX and X English Textbooks based on the Knowledge Dimension and the Cognitive Process Domain of Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

For the purpose of this study, a coding scheme presenting a two

dimensional framework identifying both the kind of knowledge to be learned (knowledge dimension) and the kind of learning expected from the students (cognitive processes) was framed to codify, classify and analyse the content of the textbooks based on the Knowledge Dimension and the Cognitive Process Domain of Revised Bloom's Taxonomy as shown in Table 2 and 3.

Table 2
Coding scheme based on Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

Knowledge Dimension	Cognitive Process Domain					
	Remember (A)	Understand (B)	Apply (C)	Analyse (D)	Evaluate (E)	Create (F)
Factual (1)	A1	B1	C1	D1	E1	F1
Conceptual (2)	A2	B2	C2	D2	E2	F2
Procedural (3)	A3	B3	C3	D3	E3	F3
Metacognition (4)	A4	B4	C4	D4	E4	F4

Table 3
Description of codes

Code Name	Code Meaning	Code Name	Code Meaning
A1	Remember Factual Knowledge	D1	Analyse Factual Knowledge
A2	Remember Conceptual Knowledge	D2	Analyse Conceptual Knowledge
A3	Remember Procedural Knowledge	D3	Analyse Procedural Knowledge
A4	Remember Metacognition Knowledge	D4	Analyse Metacognition Knowledge
B1	Understand Factual Knowledge	E1	Evaluate Factual Knowledge
B2	Understand Conceptual Knowledge	E2	Evaluate Conceptual Knowledge
B3	Understand Procedural Knowledge	E3	Evaluate Procedural Knowledge
B4	Understand Metacognition Knowledge	E4	Evaluate Metacognition Knowledge
C1	Apply Factual Knowledge	F1	Create Factual Knowledge
C2	Apply Conceptual Knowledge	F2	Create Conceptual Knowledge
C3	Apply Procedural Knowledge	F3	Create Procedural Knowledge
C4	Apply Metacognition Knowledge	F4	Create Metacognition Knowledge

Using the coding scheme highlighted in Table 2, exercises in Classes IX and X English textbooks were carefully coded and analysed by the investigator. The investigator also made an attempt to find out the difference in distribution of the exercises between Classes IX and X English textbooks.

The findings with regard to this analysis are presented as follows.

Figure 8 shows that in Class IX English textbooks, the highest percentage was found in A1 with 30.94% while D3 is found with the least frequency with 0.20%. Levels A3, B3, C1, C2, E1, E3, F1 and F2 were absent from the exercises.

Figure 9 show that in Class X English textbooks, the highest percentage was found in B1 with 38.19%, while E2 is found

Analysis of the distribution of exercises in Class IX and X English textbooks based on the Knowledge Dimension and Cognitive Process Domain

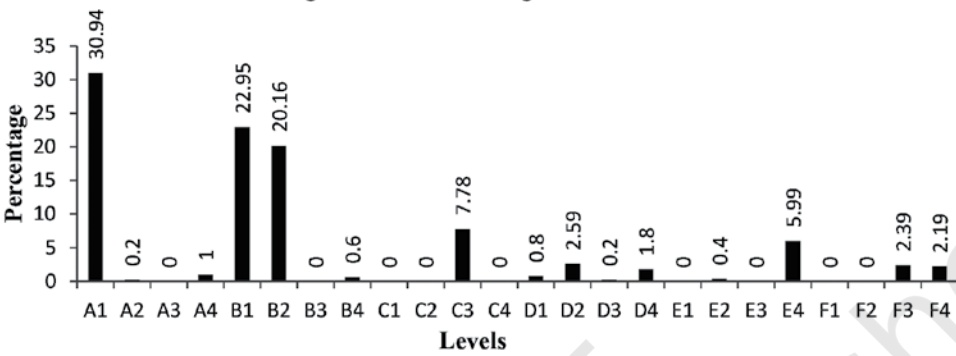


Fig. 8 Distribution of exercises in Class IX English textbooks based on the knowledge Dimension and Cognitive Process Domain



Fig. 9 Distribution of exercises in Class X English textbooks based on the knowledge Dimension and Cognitive Process Domain

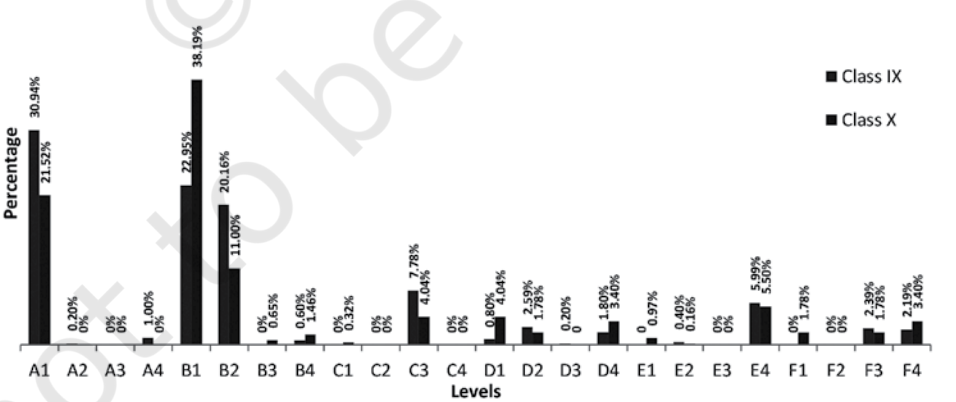


Fig. 10 Distribution of exercises in Class IX and Class X English textbooks based on the knowledge Dimension and Cognitive Process Domain

with the least frequency with 0.16%. Levels D3, E3, F2, C2 and C4 were absent in the exercises.

Figure 10 showed that the three most frequent occurring exercises in Class IX are A1, B1 and B2 whereas in Class X, the three most frequent occurring exercises are B1, A1 and B2. The level with the least number of exercises is D3 in Class IX and E2 in Class X. Levels A3, B3, C1, C2, E1, E3, F1 and F2 were absent in Class IX textbooks, whereas levels D3, E3, F2, C2 and C4 were absent in Class X textbooks.

Discussion: Findings reveal an irregular distribution of exercises in both Classes IX and X textbooks where a huge concentration is found in questions asking for remembering and understanding of factual and conceptual knowledge. There seems to be no definite pattern in the progression across different levels. It is suggested that Classes IX

and X textbooks have a reasonable distribution of various levels of questions in their exercises and also form a pattern in the increase or decrease of the number of exercises at each level based on their difficulty as learners move from Classes IX to X.

Figure 1 presents the result of the analysis of the overall distribution of exercises in Class IX and X English textbooks based on the Knowledge Dimension and Cognitive Process Domain. The order of frequency of occurrence of exercises based on the Knowledge Dimension and Cognitive Process Domain according to the codes given for each level are: B1, A1, B2, C3, E4, F4, D4, D1, D2, F3, B4, F1, E1, A4, B3, E2, C1, A2 and D3, respectively. The selected textbooks did not have exercises that fall under levels A3, C2, C4, E3 and F2.

Discussion: The findings indicate that exercises in both Classes IX and X textbooks are more focused

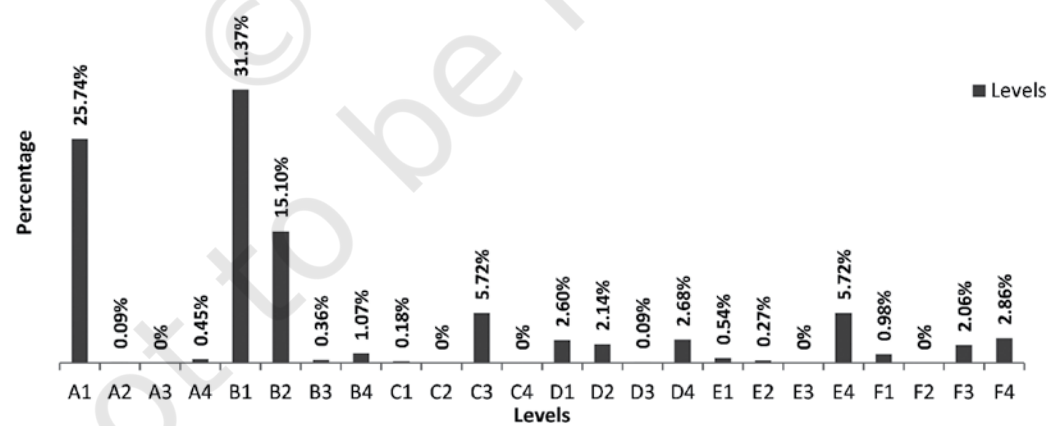


Fig. 11 Consolidated report of the distribution of exercises in Class IX and X English textbooks based on the Knowledge Dimension and Cognitive Process Domain

on questions that demand learners to remember factual knowledge (A1), understand factual knowledge (B1) or understand conceptual knowledge (B2). Other types of questions were minimal and there were no questions in reference to remembering procedural knowledge, applying conceptual or metacognitive knowledge, evaluating procedural knowledge or creating by using conceptual knowledge. This implies that all the levels in the RBT were not covered in the selected textbooks and the first three most frequently occurring questions only asked for lower level of thinking skills.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The overall findings demonstrated that though the analysed textbooks of this study incorporated both the lower level and higher level thinking skills, they were not successful in representing all the codes in the RBT learning objectives, since some codes were totally absent or nearly neglected. Results indicated higher frequency of occurrence of exercises in the lower levels of

both the Cognitive domain and the Knowledge dimension of the RBT thereby, implying that the exercises are not adequate for developing the higher level of cognitive ability. Based on the findings, it is recommended that textbook designers regard credited taxonomies like RBT to incorporate higher learning objectives while preparing the textbooks. Furthermore, teachers can consider the HOTS level of evaluation as well as higher knowledge dimensions questions in their formative and summative evaluations. In sum, the results of the current study imply that questions available in the textbooks should be revised to engage students more in higher-order cognitive skills with higher level in the knowledge dimension covering all the objectives of both the Cognitive domain and Knowledge dimension combined as this will contribute to focus on the higher-order cognitive processes and would help students work more effectively and intellectually in the tasks they encounter within or outside the classrooms.

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