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Exploring the Manifestation of Critical Thinking in the Moroccan Textbooks of English: The Case of "*Ticket 2 English*"

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The purpose of this study was to explore whether *Ticket 2 English*, a Moroccan textbook of English, includes elements of critical thinking, which refers to the skill and disposition to select, collect, analyze, and evaluate information effectively. Descriptive analysis was employed to document instructions and activities that support the inclusion of critical thinking (CT) elements in the textbook. Results suggest that *Ticket 2 English* includes most of the skills found in Bloom's taxonomy, important critical thinking dispositions, and some activities for teaching critical thinking. Yet, textbook designers need to supplement textbooks of English with additional activities, and high school teachers of English need to implement new teaching materials and practices to help enhance students' level of critical thinking.

Keywords: Critical thinking, English language classroom, Ticket 2 English

INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking (CT), defined as the skill and disposition to select, gather, analyze, and evaluate information effectively, is one of the primary goals of educational programs around the world. As a desired outcome, CT allows students to be effective learners in the educational process, responsible citizens in daily life, and successful employees in the job market. Therefore, one of the reasons that motivated this study is that students need to be socialized to develop an important degree of CT in the high school context before moving to university, where they are supposed to self-direct their learning and become autonomous learners.

Although the Moroccan Association of Teachers of English (MATE) dedicated the whole conference to discussing the concept of CT in the city of Oujda, Morocco in 2012, only one study dealt with examining the place of CT in reading in the second year baccalaureate textbooks of English, including *Ticket 2 English*. This further increased the researcher's motivation to look at different CT elements in the course book in an effort to motivate research on CT in Morocco. Accordingly, it is essential to investigate the manifestation of CT in the high school context in general and in the English language classroom in particular to understand what aspects of the curriculum need to be addressed to help students enhance this significant skill. The main purpose is hereby to explore the manifestation of CT in a Moroccan textbook of English, namely *Ticket 2 English*.

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This study will redound to the benefits of textbooks' designers and high school teachers of English in Morocco. On the one hand, the implications derived from this study will help textbooks' designers revise the current textbooks with the aim to supplement them with additional activities that help foster CT. On the other hand, high school teachers will benefit from this study by becoming familiar with activities that help enhance CT and adopting new instructional practices in the educational process to make CT instruction possible in the high school context.

CT has influenced discussions of education as an outcome of student learning. This importance has yielded many definitions of CT that largely overlap. A close reading of the literature on CT reveals that the concept has been approached from the perspectives of philosophers e.g., Ennis (1997), cognitive psychologists like Sternberg and Baron (1985) and educationalists, such as Bloom (1956). All these authors use different yet complementary terms and processes to define the concept of CT. Each agrees that CT involves skills and dispositions, and most of the definitions highlight the skill and disposition to select, gather, analyze, and evaluate information effectively. Other CT skills emphasized in the literature are the ability to solve problems and make decisions.

The definitions of CT include a number of simple and complex skills. These skills are considered the backbone of conceptualizing CT. Wegrief (2002) maintained that the use of thinking skills enables learners to develop both declarative and procedural knowledge. While the former is concerned with knowledge of facts, the latter pertains to putting those facts into practice. According to this scholar, developing both types of knowledge helps students monitor their learning. Since a number of thinking skills are identified in the literature, this study places focus on the cognitive domain of Bloom's traditional taxonomy in the English language classroom. The reason for choosing this taxonomy over the revisited one is the belief that when creating information, the last stage of CT skills in the new taxonomy, by means of research, it is important to check whether the produced work meets the criteria of academic research. In so doing, it is advisable to compare the current work with other published studies, or use a rubric including the characteristics of academic research to come up with a reasonable conclusion. An attempt to answer such questions leads to the process of evaluation. Thus, reconsidering the order of creation and evaluation skills in the revisited taxonomy is called for.

Bloom and his colleagues identified six thinking skills and categorized them into lower order thinking skills: knowledge, comprehension, and application, and higher order thinking skills: analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. They eloquently suggested that developing "intellectual skills" requires going from the simplest levels to the most complex ones in order to ensure that one's thinking is critical Bloom (1956). Different explanations of the taxonomy found in the literature. Providing a detailed explanation of the taxonomy is beyond this study. Likewise, the examples used to explain the six skills may reveal little disagreement with other researchers' understanding and,

hence, explanation of the taxonomy. However, respect for the order of the skills is respected.

With regard to lower order thinking skills, knowledge is the initial step to start activating intellectual abilities. A language learner, for instance, can memorize vocabulary words, grammatical rules, and names of countries and people in English. The second step is comprehension whereby the learner demonstrates understanding by paraphrasing words memorized in a specific context to produce an accurate utterance. Another way to develop comprehension is by answering listening or reading questions and translating texts. After that, there is application wherein the learner can carry out a task to apply what he/she has learned in the previous stages. In this regard, the learner knows the grammatical rule, such as simple present and can apply it to relate his/her daily habits. As for higher order thinking skills, the individual learner can develop the skill of analysis by using contextual clues to guess the meaning of new words, making inferences, formulating opinions, and using evidence to support these opinions. Conversely, synthesis means applying prior knowledge and skills to recreate new and original knowledge. Students can practice this skill by combining their knowledge of language skills, mainly vocabulary and grammar with knowledge from a reading text related to sociology/history to write an essay and by carrying out research to produce new information. In this study, summarizing texts, an authentic activity, is also considered a tool that helps develop the skill of synthesis. Even though students work on the same text, they are likely to produce different summaries depending on the level of their understanding of the concepts, vocabulary items, and structures included in the text. Finally, the skill of evaluation requires judging the value of a material based on personal opinions and values without judging if the ideas are right or wrong. English language learners may develop such a skill by comparing and contrasting elements of their L1 with the English language, or their own culture with the target language culture. Another way to develop the skill of evaluation is by reflecting on learning since this helps students assess their current level of language development.

Halpern (1999) asserted that CT does not only entail the use of an appropriate skill in the right context, but it is also a disposition to recognize the right time and way to apply the target skill exerting mental effort. Some of the most important dispositions are inquisitiveness, truth-seeking, open-mindedness, and cognitive maturity. Inquisitiveness refers to the act of seeking new knowledge and remaining well-informed. Truth-seeking means honesty in facing one's own biases, prejudices, or stereotypes. However, open-mindedness is observed when issues are examined from different sides, looking for both good and bad points. It also means to be flexible in considering alternative opinions and others' views. Finally, cognitive maturity pertains to the act of being open to others' opinions, prejudices, and biases Ricketts and Rudd (2004).

In order to help students develop CT, teachers can employ a number of activities that researchers recommend. First, questioning is considered an effective strategy that fosters CT.

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Questioning use aims at guiding thinking and encouraging learners to interpret, analyze, create and reflect on information and ideas. "Questioning has been accepted among educators as an open-ended process of inquiry and a function of critical thinking". This means that it is essential for teachers to raise questions, which allow students to express their ideas and give their points of view instead of using questions that elicit factual information. Hence, it is advisable that instructors "develop the skills to spontaneously raise and respond to good questions since they are likely to nourish students' intellect" Thampson (2011). Halverson (2009) also proposed three classroom techniques for teachers to help their students develop critical thinking. These include debate, media analysis, and problem-solving. The author applied these techniques in teaching contexts where English is taught both as a second and a foreign language, asserting that those three classroom techniques "have a degree of universality and practicality that makes them almost immediately applicable to most teaching circumstances" (p. 3). These techniques seem to be authentic since they take examples from everyday life. Overall, debate, media analysis and problem-solving are part of one's daily life, meaning that if students are exposed those techniques in class, they will be able to transfer critical thinking abilities from the formal context to the real world.

Further, collaborative learning has been recommended as an effective strategy to foster students' CT. This recommendation has sprung from the work of both Piaget and Vygotsky who "emphasize the value of social interactions for promoting cognitive development" as cited in Lai (2011). For Piaget, interaction between learners leads to cognitive growth. Similarly, Vygotsky indicated that people accomplish a lot when working cooperatively than individually. He further emphasized that "learning occurs in interaction with other people (social learning), especially with the help of a more capable other, often a teacher" Oxford (2001). This may explain the importance of social learning strategies in developing CT. Last but not least, critical writing serves as an essential strategy for enhancing CT. There is a six-stage approach to critical writing that foreign language teachers can follow in the writing class. The first stage is framed within "brainstorming" and "free writing". Through brainstorming, learners think of a number of topics before selecting the appropriate one; in free writing, students take a short time to write freely and then share their work with peers in order to seek advice and suggestions concerning the story written. The second stage is framed within raising students' awareness through "discussions about the different rhetorical traditions and expectations highlighted". This requires students to write the first draft as an assignment at home and develop the ideas elicited in the first phase. The third stage requires 'peer evaluation' in which "reviewers have the chance to use their knowledge of writing in a way that promotes learning from their own advice". Students should take into account the pieces of advice that reviewers provide. In the fourth stage, learners have the opportunity to write the second draft by making the changes provided in the previous stage. In

the fifth stage, there is revision through peer evaluation; here, "peers read again and students are asked to revise again" (p.91); in the sixth stage, they submit the final draft to the teacher with the notes they took during the peer evaluation stages so that "students and their teacher see all the critical thinking and discussion along the way" Farrell and Jacobs (2010).

The purpose of this study was to explore whether *Ticket 2 English*, a Moroccan English textbook of second year baccalaureate, includes elements of CT. In this respect, the research question was forwarded as follows *"What CT elements can be found in Ticket 2 English?"*

METHODS

Ticket 2 Englis h was selected as a case study. It was developed by the Ministry of Education in 2007 and designed in accordance with the principles set forth in the National Charter for Education and Training. The textbook also subscribes to a standards-based approach to the teaching of English as a foreign language, see English language guidelines for secondary schools: Common core and second year Baccalaureate (2007).

Ticket 2 English is used by both teachers and learners of English at high schools in Morocco. It includes ten Units, namely "The Gifts of Youth", "Cultural Issues and Values", "Advances in Science and Technology", "Women and Power", "Brain Drain", "Humour", "Citizenship", "International Organizations", "Formal, Informal and Non-Formal Education", and "Sustainable Development". Each Unit includes the following seven parts: 1) communication, 2) vocabulary, 3) grammar, 4) culture, 5) study skills, 6) project work, 7) and revision and evaluation. All the Units were thoroughly analyzed, excluding the supplementary sections at the end of the textbook.

To measure the manifestation of CT in *Ticket 2 English*, content analysis was implemented as a research instrument for this study. The process of analysis was carried out by designing a checklist (see **Table 1**) to collect qualitative data from the textbook. The checklist was developed to find whether the elements of CT are tapped in the textbook: the cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy, the dispositions of inquisitiveness, open-mindedness, cognitive maturity, and truth-seeking; and Open-ended questions, collaborative work, debate, media analysis, problem-solving, and critical writing.

To answer the research question, what CT elements can be found in *Ticket 2 English*, descriptive analysis was the main procedure to examine the textbook in the light of the established theoretical framework of this study. Specifically, the analysis of the textbook was achieved by documenting instructions and activities that support the inclusion (or exclusion) of CT.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The obtained data in this study is summarized by using checklist showed in Table 1. To get more information, the following

TABLE 1 | Checklist used to analyze the manifestation of CT in Ticket 2 English

Aspects	Critical Thinking elements	Included (v)/ not included (x)
CT skills	- Knowledge	v
	- Comprehension	v
	- Application	v
	- Analysis	v
	- Synthesis	x
	- Evaluation	v
CT dispositions	- Inquisitiveness	v
	- Open-mindedness	v
	- Cognitive maturity	v
	- Truth-seeking	v
Activities for teaching CT	- Open-ended questions	v
	- Collaborative learning	v
	- Debate	v
	- Media analysis	x
	- Problem-solving	x
	- Critical writing	v

parts elaborate the findings from each aspect and connect them to the related theories.

CT Skills

As Table I reveals, the textbook contains almost all the CT skills found in Bloom's taxonomy. As for lower-order thinking abilities, students have a chance to develop the skill of knowledge. In this manner, students are required to reproduce the information (e.g., vocabulary items) that they have learned by matching items, filling in charts, blanks and diagrams (here are the characteristics of talented youths. Read them and fill in the blanks from the list, Unit 1, p. 8). The learners practice these activities to remember facts (e.g., Bossoufa was the first North African to win the Belgian best player award, Unit 1, p. 13) and expressions of agreement/disagreement (Unit 1, p. 11), apologizing (Unit 6, p. 85) etc. The comprehension skill is also included in the textbook. The learners develop such a skill by filling in blanks with the correct grammar forms (e.g., gerund or tense, Unit 3, p. 44). In addition, the students foster the skill of understanding by answering reading and listening comprehension questions which are included in each Unit in the textbook. In this context, the students either go back to the text or listen to tapes to answer true/false questions, justify their answers, and devise examples from the text (Unit 3, p. 43). In order to develop the skills of knowledge and comprehension, it is important to put them into practice. As a critical thinking skill, application is included in the textbook; students apply techniques that they have learned both inside and outside the classroom context. For instance, they are required to practice func-

tions of navigating the Internet by logging onto this following website: www.maroc.ma (Unit 4, p. 62) at home. The learners can further practice the skill through acting out dialogues; this activity is known as role-play (with your peer, complete the following dialogues and act them out, Unit 7, p. 101). Moreover, the students learn the techniques of delivering presentations and apply them while preparing and giving short talks (Unit 7, p. 109). This suggests that textbook helps learners develop first declarative knowledge and then procedural knowledge, which are the main foundations of meta-cognitive thinking. This, in turn, can help them use these strategies across other subjects and in real life situations, which will make transfer of learning attainable.

As for higher order thinking skills, the students practice the skill of analysis by inferring the implicit assumptions behind sentences (e.g., it is difficult for a woman to manage a big firm; it requires a lot of energy and hard work, Unit 5, p. 78). The skill of analysis is also observed when learners employ contextual clues to guess the meaning of words (e.g., go back to the passages, and guess from context what these words mean: non-profit and long term, Unit 8, p. 117). Besides, the textbook helps the students develop the analysis skill by voicing their opinions (express your opinions about these issues, such as youths and involvements in politics. Then invite a partner to agree or disagree with you, Unit 1, p. 11). However, the synthesis skill is not included in the syllabus. There is no room for using knowledge of English with another subject, such as history or philosophy to write an essay or project. Similarly, the textbook does not allow students to summarize texts in reading sections. Lastly, the textbook tends to encourage the devel-

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opment of the skill of evaluation by giving students a chance to make comparisons and contrasts between illiteracy in England, U.S.A. and Morocco (Unit 3, p. 49), and between cultural differences between western and Indian manners (Unit 6, p. 93). Students further enhance the skill of evaluation by assessing the validity of stereotypes foreigners have about Moroccan ways of life (e.g., Moroccans drink tea more than water, Unit 6, p. 86).

Given that the textbook includes CT skills found in Bloom's taxonomy except for the skill of synthesis indicates that Elboubekri (2013)'s suggestions that "textbooks' designers should select contents that can be exploited for critical and intercultural perspectives" (p.1935) may sound unfair because the current analysis shows that the textbook includes a rich content that helps foster second baccalaureate students' CT skills.

CT Dispositions

As **Table 1** also shows, *Ticket 2 English* has room for the target CT dispositions. To start with, the students have opportunities to work on developing the disposition of inquisitiveness by conducting research (e.g., do a net search to find out the similarities and differences between Indian and Western manners, Unit 6, p. 93), carrying out projects (Unit 6, p. 94), delivering presentations (Unit 1, p. 19), and conducting surveys (Unit 8 p. 123). To foster the disposition of open-mindedness, the students are requested to exchange their writings and make comments on them before they hand them in to their teacher (e.g., exchange letters with your partner, correct his/her mistakes, and check whether he/she has respected the language and form of informal letters, Unit 6, p. 91). In the 'Study Skills' Unit, the learners are made aware of the benefits of group work to become open to others' comments and viewpoints (unit 7, p. 108). The textbook also helps develop the learners' cognitive maturity in that students are introduced to some stereotypes (e.g., Moroccans are outgoing) that foreigners may have about Moroccan people and are given opportunities to comment on these stereotypes (Unit 6, p. 86). This, in turn, may help students develop the truth-seeking attitude because being aware of stereotypes about their culture is very likely to encourage these learners to refine their own biases and prejudices toward others. Different authors agree that these dispositions in general and open-mindedness in particular are important to develop enough degree of CT Kennedy et al. (1991), Facione (1990), Caroll (2004).

Activities for Teaching CT

The textbook has room for some activities for teaching CT. The following indirect and direct open-ended questions are respectively located in the textbook: 'discuss in your class ways you can use to help illiterate people in your area to learn how to read and write' (Unit 3, p. 43), and 'how do you think we can turn brain drain into brain gain?' Unit 10, p. 147). These questions are related to the issues discussed in the reading text; that is,

they help learners, in addition to the previously learnt information, expand their knowledge about the issues discussed. Such questions help learners express their opinions and enable them to be more productive and think outside the often limited scope of the text Shomoossi (2004). Nunan (1989) further added: "it is not inconceivable that the effort involved in answering referential questions prompts a greater effort and depth of processing on the part of the learner" (p. 30). The open-ended questions included in the textbook help students work on developing the skill of analysis by formulating opinions and providing evidence to support them. However, these questions do not allow the students to create or reflect on information nor do they encourage them to develop reflective thinking, suggesting that encouraging the development of the skill of synthesis is beyond the textbook. In general, questions as an aspect of classroom talk are important, especially if their aim is to help students express their opinions and reflect on their learning. On their part, answering open-ended questions helps students produce a large amount of language, which is an opportunity to practice, and hence, develop oral language and CT skills. Overall, the results of this study confirm those of Elmouhtarim (2012) who reported that *Ticket 2 English* includes important CT questions.

The inclusion of collaborative work in the textbook is frequent; the learners in each Unit in the textbook have the opportunity to work in pairs or groups, conduct surveys, prepare presentations, carry out projects, and comment on each other's writing. Collaborative work helps students develop social skills and analytic thinking. In other words, learners have an opportunity to learn from each other by providing evidence to convince each other in the interaction process. Interestingly, the way group work is implemented in the textbook respects the instructions provided by Nelson (1994).

The strategy of debate is also embodied in the textbook. The learners are required to discuss issues, ideas, opinions and why-questions (discuss these quotations with your partners: 'find a job you love and you will never work a day in your life', Unit 2, p. 26). The learners work in groups to answer open-ended questions (e.g., do you think that the situation of women has changed? How? (Unit 5, p. 70). In this context, they give their opinions and arguments and support them by giving examples. However, media analysis activities are totally absent from the textbook. Concerning the problem-solving tasks included in the textbook, they mainly deal with solving language issues (i.e., grammar rules) rather than with real life problems. This suggests that the absence of these two activities may hinder the development of essential CT skills and dispositions in the learning operation. It further indicates that only one out of the three classroom techniques, which Halverson (2009) recommended, was taken into consideration while designing the textbook of English.

For producing a piece of critical writing, the instructions in the textbook require the students to write the first draft, and exchange the story, email, letter or article with partners in order to comment on each other's piece of writing. Then, the students

need to make corrections if any before they submit the final work to the teacher (Units: 8, 9 and 10, the writing sections). The way critical writing organized meets the recommendations found in the work of Farrell and Jacobs (2010). While the writers use a six-stage approach, the textbook includes the same instructions but reduces the approach to three stages.

CONCLUSION

To answer the research question, what CT elements can be found in *Ticket 2 English*, the findings suggested that the textbook includes important CT skills, dispositions, and activities. Yet, textbooks' designers need to supplement textbooks of the English language with additional activities, and high school teachers of English need to implement new teaching materials and practices to help enhance students' level of CT.

When teachers help learners develop certain language skills like reading, they should emphasize some sub-critical thinking skills (e.g., inductive reasons, understanding, summarizing, etc.) in the learning process. For example, while activating students' schemata during the pre-reading stage, students are usually asked to read the title of a text and the first and last sentence of each paragraph in order to guess or hypothesize what the passage will be about. In this regard, students have a chance to develop the creative skills (see Wegerif (2002)) or prediction skills (see Sternberg and Baron (1985)), which are advocated by the cognitive psychological and philosophical approaches to critical thinking. When students move to the while reading stage, they make inferences or use contextual clues to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words whereby they foster the skills of understanding and analysis simultaneously. In the post-reading stage, students are usually required to summarize the text — an activity that helps them foster the skill of synthesis — or listen to a lecture on the same topic to expand their knowledge of the issues introduced in the text before being asked to compare and contrast that information — an activity that helps students develop the skill of evaluation.

Based on current findings, this manuscript provided four essential implications for implementation. First, the absence of synthesis, a higher order thinking skill, in the textbook urgently requires designing the textbook around tasks that require learners to summarize texts in the reading and listening sections with teachers assigning them as homework. Second, the textbooks of English need to be designed around problem-solving activities so that students, once they leave the high school environment, can cope with the demands of university, professional workplace, and the realities of the everyday world. Third, teachers need to adjust their teaching practices making the teaching of CT effective. For example, teachers of English need to guide their students to conduct project work activities to enhance inquisitiveness and social skills. Further, if students learn how to take notes, an important study skill at university, and apply it while their partners or teachers are speaking, they will be able to develop the application and

problem-solving skills. Fourth, given that media analysis activities are not tapped in textbook requires teachers to develop teaching materials during the learning process. For example, teacher can use different newspapers as learning materials with the aim to discuss everyday issues from different perspectives to assess news truthfulness. This will help students be aware of their biases, and hence, reflect on and refine them.

This study had two main limitations. First, a comprehensive investigation of CT is necessary to evaluate whether other course books of English, such as Insights into English and Gateway to English include CT elements. The fact that this study targeted only one grade level served as the other limitation.

Thus, future research is necessary. For example, a study using an observation technique to explore whether teachers use instructional strategies that aim at fostering students' CT would yield interesting results. Other studies can also investigate the issue of CT on a larger scale that includes quantitative analysis of the textbooks used by 9-grade, common core, and first year baccalaureate students to reach interesting and generalizable findings. Lastly, a quasi-experimental study would enrich the current available literature on CT. A researcher may administer a pre-test to assess students' level of CT; then he/she may implement activities that aim to foster some CT elements during the learning process. After that, the researcher may conduct a post-test to examine if the treatment has played a role in helping students develop the target CT elements.

The analysis of *Ticket 2 English* showed that textbook designers are aware of CT theory and could implement it by developing contents that generically help second baccalaureate students become critical thinkers. However, teachers ignoring important activities in the textbook (e.g., Units of Study Skills and Project Work) may raise interesting issues. The first one is that such teachers may be unaware that such activities target important CT skills and dispositions. Elboubekri (2013) confirmed this view, stating that "when it comes to suggesting possible effective ways of teaching English language in Moroccan schools, no informant, particularly teachers, refers to critical thinking approach in teaching" (p.1934). Another issue is that high school teachers may not have received enough training in CT instruction. The other issue is that these instructors' primary concern could be preparing their students for the national baccalaureate English examination rather than to help the learners foster a degree of CT.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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