Research Article

LEVELS OF THINKING SKILLS AND ATTITUDES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM: IMPLICATIONS TO INSTRUCTION AND LEARNING

* Maria Luisa S. Saministrado, PhD

Department of English Language and Literature, Xavier University, Philippines.

ABSTRACT

This study examined university students' thinking skills and attitudes toward English at Xavier University—Ateneo de Cagayan, Philippines. Given the role accorded to teachers in promoting students' higher-order thinking skills, it considered the teacher's years of experience in the classroom and its implications for instruction and learning. It used a researcher-made instrument to assess students' attitudes and their levels of thinking skills based on Bloom's Taxonomy. Most students had positive attitudes towards the teaching and the English program. Their thinking levels ranged from the low-average to high-average range, especially in terms of knowledge and comprehension. However, there is potential for improvement in the analysis and synthesis aspects of thinking. To enhance the student's thinking skills, teachers should focus on asking higher-level questions during verbal interactions and written assessments, particularly those related to analysis and synthesis. Additionally, English teachers can incorporate more diverse and hands-on activities in the classroom, such as role plays, panel discussions, inquiry-based projects, and class presentations, to improve academic performance. Regularly providing written drills and organized exercises for students to engage with can also help improve classroom learning and foster a better understanding and appreciation of English as a subject.

Keywords: thinking skills, English program, attitude, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, knowledge, comprehension.

INTRODUCTION

Effective questioning in the classroom is essential for promoting higher-level thinking among students. However, Glusac *et al.,* (2019) argue that most educational materials only elicit knowledge and comprehension responses, impeding academic success. Educators need to enhance their questioning techniques and incorporate more advanced strategies into their teaching methods to improve student learning (Redfield & Rousseau, 1991), highlighting the importance of teacher training programs in this area.

Hattie (2012) claims that teachers who use effective questioning techniques can enhance student learning and engagement. For example, open-ended questions require students to provide detailed responses and can improve student comprehension and critical thinking skills (Muir-Herzig & Mulholland, 2018). In addition, teachers can use questioning to encourage student creativity and self-evaluation. By asking reflective questions, teachers can help students think about their learning processes and identify areas for improvement (Black & Wiliam, 1998). According to Woods (2019), teachers have the opportunity to promote collaborative learning through effective questioning techniques that encourage students to share their unique ideas and perspectives. By incorporating effective questioning strategies into their instruction, teachers can enhance student learning, engagement, and thinking skills. Teacher training programs must emphasize developing practical questioning skills to ensure students achieve at higher levels. Questioning, therefore, is inevitable as a part of student-teacher interaction and assessment. Student interest and motivation are enhanced by higher-order questions that can be classified as application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Eanes, 1997). Such classification of questions is designed to develop higher-order thinking skills in demonstrating what the student has learned.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Higher-order thinking involves making evaluative judgments, and effective teaching of this skill requires teacher questioning to reinforce learning, assess achievement, and check student understanding (Bruce, 2019). In the classroom, verbal interactions and questioning are important since questioning strategies play a crucial role in a teacher's interactive teaching skills (Cooper, 1999). According to Goronga (2013), classroom interaction enhances student involvement in teaching-learning. The ability to engage students in higher levels of thinking has been a significant concern for educators for the past few decades (Bloom, 1956). However, despite this concern, most classroom activities give students insufficient opportunity to use information in valuable and creative ways. This situation can be significantly improved if educators consciously try to employ concepts from Benjamin Bloom. The effort to classify questions offers educators the chance to develop questions that question, which means focusing on higher levels of questioning and not simply information recall and improving other learning activities that will enable students to practice higher and more creative levels of thinking (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Higher-order thinking skills are fundamental for cognitive development and are based on Bloom's cognitive domains, which outline different levels of thinking. When students simply follow directions, understand ideas, or recall information, they are utilizing the lowest levels of thinking. On the other hand, higher levels of thinking involve more complex cognitive processes, such as recognizing relationships, analyzing how things work, and applying knowledge to various situations (Bloom, 1956). Higher-order thinking skills allow learners and educators to think clearly and logically, encompassing a variety of skill sets including problem-solving, logic, evaluation, and reflection (Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2020). The focus on problem-solving and logic highlights the educator's role in developing these skills. Additionally, learners can identify and place different thinking components within the framework of desired

*Corresponding Author: Maria Luisa S. Saministrado, PhD,
Department of English Language and Literature, Xavier University, Philippines.

intellectual standards. This enables them to cultivate the higher-order thinking abilities necessary for academic success and lifelong learning. According to Pešić (2011), evaluating intellectual products, such as ideas and beliefs, is a common aspect of the cognitive domain. Learners assess these products to determine their qualities, such as relevance, validity, and evidence-based support. This evaluation process is essential to higher-order thinking, allowing learners to critically analyze and assess information.

In Benjamin Bloom's classification of cognitive domain and questioning, knowledge is the lowest level of thinking, followed by comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom, 1956). Knowledge questions require recalling specific information, such as facts, principles, and generalizations and involve answering question words such as who, what, when, and where. They also require restating information that needs to be changed. The cognitive skills involved in knowledge questions include listing, giving, enumerating, labeling, citing, quoting, identity, stating, quoting, reproducing, and naming (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Comprehension is the ability to understand ideas and extract meaning from the material by translating and interpreting it meaningfully (NRP, 2000). The cognitive skills in comprehension questions include the ability to convert, discuss, estimate, give examples, restate, translate, illustrate, interpret, summarize, paraphrase, and explain (Anderson *et al.,* 1985). These skills are essential for successful comprehension, allowing the reader to actively engage with and process the material rather than just passively reading it.

The application level in Bloom's Taxonomy requires students to move beyond basic recall and demonstrate their ability to use concepts and ideas in specific and concrete situations (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). This cognitive skill level includes applying, solving, determining, using, calculating, discovering, showing, computing, directing, and presenting (Bates & Galloway, 2002). Hence, in application questions, students are expected to recall information and apply their knowledge in real-life scenarios.

Analysis questions use meaningful categories to separate constituent elements or parts (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2018). They refer to seeing relationships, breaking information into parts, and analyzing how things work. Cognitive skills at this level include analyzing, pointing out, differentiating, discriminating, separating, outlining, showing bias, discussing rationale, indicating techniques, comparing and contrasting, showing cause, tracing steps, determining logic, and hypothesizing (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Synthesis creates a new body of information from previous information (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). This involves combining various elements to form a new whole, creating a structure or pattern that did not exist before. Synthesis is classified as creative thinking in Bloom's levels of cognitive domain and questioning. It requires students to think about the literature in a new way and to combine ideas from multiple areas and periods of their education, moving beyond the scope of the individual piece. During synthesis, students are expected to engage in various activities such as creating, planning, devising, designing, developing, composing, constructing, integrating, writing, inventing, expanding, proposing, and rewriting. These verbs describe the different processes that occur during synthesis. By synthesizing, students can develop a deeper understanding of the material and create something original that contributes to the existing body of knowledge.

Evaluation is the highest level of thinking in Bloom's Taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). It involves expressing an objective or subjective opinion supported by facts. It enables the learner to form judgments based on facts, examples, and specific criteria and assess the value or worth of information. The learner must have achieved all other taxonomy levels to reach this level. Evaluation tasks may include judging accuracy, supporting one's argument for or against, expressing personal opinions, or deciding between proposals for reaching a goal. The cognitive skills involved in evaluation include appraising, concluding, critiquing, judging, assessing, deducing, criticizing, evaluating, deciding, ranking, rating, and recommending. In order to evaluate effectively, learners must have a deep understanding of the subject matter and be able to consider multiple perspectives. They must also apply critical thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation to make informed judgments. By mastering the evaluation skill, learners are better equipped to make sound decisions and solve complex problems in their personal and professional lives.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This study examined university students' thinking levels and attitudes towards English at Xavier University - Ateneo de Cagayan, Philippines. With the role accorded to teachers in promoting students' higher-order thinking skills, it considered the teacher's years of experience in the classroom and the implications to instruction and learning. A provision of the Philippine Constitution directs all educational institutions to include critical and creative thinking to develop one's spirit of inquiry and understanding and enable one to live a meaningful and valuable life. This study is important for both teachers and students since their awareness of the levels of thinking in English verbal interactions and written applications influences them to articulate their spoken and written responses in the classroom beyond the lower levels of cognitive domain and improve assessment scores, develop the ability to transfer learned content skills to new applications, encourage intelligent choices in relationships and life in general, and reinforce their democratic education for the welfare of all in society.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

Classroom interaction encourages students to actively participate in the teaching-learning process (Goronga, 2013). The question of the teacher plays a significant role in activating students' higher-order thinking Skills (HOTS). The study focuses on questions shown in the teaching-learning process that prompt students' levels of thinking. Interview and class observation are conducted and then analyzed based on Bloom's taxonomy. Data show that information recall is mostly articulated to encourage the students to share knowledge of the topic and remember information. This suggests that teachers find it difficult to practice questions using HOTS. Teachers need more practice boosting students' critical thinking skills in this unsettling era (Yulia, Yuyun Budiharti, Fenita Rizki, 2019).

ESL students at an advanced level require higher-order thinking skills to improve their language learning process (Dickinson, 1991; McKay, 2001; Stern, 1985; Terry, 2007; Van, 2009; Odenwald, 2010). To help students evaluate their own and others' arguments and think critically about resolving challenges in their daily lives, they need assistance in self-regulatory judgment. Critical thinking encourages learning engagement and helps students understand and apply information from classroom interactions (Landsberger, 1999; Tung & Chang, 2009). Literature study can teach ESL students critical thinking skills

and overall literacy. Literature texts that are enjoyable, authentic, and encouraging are valuable to ESL students' cultural awareness and understanding of the target language patterns, as observed in numerous studies (Shukri & Mukundan, 2015).

Embedded in Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive domains, Khadijeh and Rad's study focuses on finding the relationship between listening comprehension and the critical thinking of Iranian elementary school EFL learners, aiming at the moderating role of gender. Having reduced the Oxford Quick Placement test, the researchers randomly selected 40 male and 40 female elementary-level Iranian EFL learners as the leading participants in this study. The Wijanarko California Thinking Skills Test and the listening comprehension test (2010), based on Bloom's Taxonomy, were administered to determine the relationship between critical thinking and listening comprehension of Iranian elementary EFL learners, bearing in mind gender's moderating role. Using regression analyses, two-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation, the researchers found no significant interaction among the learners' critical thinking, gender, and listening comprehension abilities. The findings, however, showed significant positive relationships between male and female participants' thinking skills and listening comprehension. The findings point to the importance of critical thinking in teaching and language learning (Khadijeh & Rad, 2018).

The study by Glusac et al. evaluated test questionnaires constructed by teachers based on the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy for the cognitive domains. It was found that very few tasks in the tests target higher-order thinking levels, raising the question of whether the teachers have the required knowledge and skills for test construction that would assess the ability of students to perform at various levels of cognitive complexity in the English language. It also raised the question of whether the teachers need to gain knowledge of critical thinking in general because their approach to assessment focuses primarily on language elements and lower-order cognitive processes. It is suggested that teachers be provided with opportunities to gain insight into critical thinking and cognitive processes because teacher and student success in the job market depends on one's thinking abilities (Glusac *et al.,* 2019).

Estaji and Aghdam (2016) conducted a study to investigate the impact of cooperative learning on the critical thinking abilities of EFL learners, including high and low achievers. The study involved fifty students from a language school randomly assigned to the experimental or control groups. Before the study, all participants took a preliminary English test (PET). A critical thinking questionnaire as a pre-test was also administered to the students of both groups. Finally, a post-test of the critical thinking questionnaire was provided to both groups. To compare the average scores of the two groups and study how the participants' level of achievement affected their critical thinking in the post-test, a two-way ANCOVA was conducted alongside an independent sample t-test. The conclusion states that the learning together model of cooperative learning significantly improved the critical thinking skills of Iranian EFL learners (Estaji & Aghdam, 2016).

Teaching can be a big challenge when the students are regarded as unwilling readers with low self-motivation and a lack of critical thinking skills (Rahman *et al.,* 2016). This study focused on a successful problem-based learning approach in a program called 'Literature for Language Purposes.' It explored the impact of problem-based learning in teaching literature, where students were required to organize and participate in a yearly English-language drama competition. The gathered data considered the researchers' reflective journals, students' reflective journals, lecturers' evaluation of FILA

tables, and responses from the end-of-semester questionnaire. It has been found that problem-based learning is suitable and advantageous for teaching and enhancing critical thinking skills (Rahman *et al.,* 2016).

Learners who analyze literary productions such as short stories or novels are offered a unique opportunity to explore, interpret, and understand the world around them, claimed Bobkin and Svetlana (2016). Critical reading of literature encourages observation and active assessment not only of linguistic items but also of a selection of viewpoints. The researchers favored the model of teaching critical thinking skills that considered the reader's response to a literary work. Adopting the critical literacy approach as a tool is exemplified through a succession of activities based on Rudyard Kipling's poem "If" (Bobkina & Svetlana, 2016).

Existing educational contexts have evolved to include the 21st-century skills that language learners must acquire (Gursoy & Bag, 2018). Two of the 4Cs (creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication) of 21st-century educational trends reveal that creativity and creative thinking are the key characteristics of learners. As one of the requirements of global communication, knowing and learning a foreign language should keep up with the current developments in education. Language learners think creatively and critically to communicate with people and enhance global collaboration. This study aims to improve students' creative thinking skills through training and to understand the effectiveness of the stimuli type (visual or audio). A pre-experimental research design was chosen to implement the training program. The audio and visual groups were given either visual or audio stimuli at the beginning of creative thinking tasks. Twelve participants were chosen for each group via convenience sampling. Two different raters scored the results, and the scores were analyzed through the SPSS program. The creative thinking capabilities of the two groups have improved, as shown in the results. The visual group students, however, have higher creative thinking after completing the program. The conclusion shows that creative thinking can be improved to some extent among English learners and should be a part of the EFL curriculum as an essential learning skill (Esim *et al.,* 2018).

In a study conducted by Asraf *et al.,* (2017), the correlation between the critical thinking ability of EFL teachers and their teaching effectiveness was investigated. The study involved 113 Iranian male and female English teachers who were required to undertake the Watson Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal. Students answered the questionnaire on the characteristics of successful EFL teachers. The statistical data analysis showed a significant correlation between EFL teachers' critical thinking skills and teaching success. The findings revealed a significant difference between male and female teachers regarding their critical thinking skills and that BA teachers differed from AS teachers regarding these skills. Male BA teachers took the most benefit from critical thinking skills than others. Asraf's study suggests that teachers with well-developed critical thinking skills are successful or effective with classroom instruction.

There is a significantly higher thinking level of students in classroom discourses where there is more Indirect Teacher Influence than those with lesser Indirect Teacher Influence (Abao, 2002). The study showed that Direct Teacher Influence, where there is teacher dominance, could interrupt learners' thought processes. Hence, in classes where there is more Direct Teacher Influence, the students' critical thinking level is significantly lower. Regarding the result of the critical thinking test, most students scored low to low average in the higher order levels such as application, analysis, and evaluation. In synthesis, the majority of the students scored poorly, while most of them scored high on average in recall.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design. The descriptive correlational research method is appropriate for this study as it would show the relationship between the student's levels of thinking and attitude toward an English program. The researcher's questionnaire on thinking levels was administered to the students. The questions are constructed based on Bloom's levels of questioning. The researcher also prepared the table of specifications for this test, which shows the content headings, types of questions based on the levels of thinking under consideration, and number of items per level of thinking. The method of Summated Ratings (Best and Kahn, 2005) is appropriate for this study because it deals with the attitude scale. The statements in the form are designed and structured for this study. This survey form was administered to the students to gather data concerning their attitude towards teaching and English instruction.

The form on Teacher Information was prepared to gather data on teacher's years of teaching. This survey form was given to each English teacher involved in the study.

Research Setting, Sampling Procedure, and Respondents. The study chose Xavier University - Ateneo de Cagayan, Philippines, as the research setting. Aside from administering test instruments to the 202 student-respondents, the researcher conducted classroom observations three times for each of the six English classes for students from the College of Arts and Sciences, School of Management, College of Engineering, College of Agriculture, and School of Education who were enrolled in the required English program. The researcher did the classroom observations to observe, in general, the teaching techniques and communication skills of the English teachers or confirm the common levels of questions that the English teachers asked during their interactions with the students. The study used the purposive sampling procedure to administer instruments on levels of thinking and attitude toward English and recorded classroom observations for overall information on classroom teaching techniques and communication skills in the English language.

Course of Students enrolled in English	Teacher Code	Number of Teacher	Number of Students
Bachelor of Arts	A	1	30
Bachelor of Science	B	1	32
Management	C	1	36
Engineering	D	1	38
Agriculture	E	1	31
Education	F	1	35

Validity and Reliability. The level of thinking skills test and student attitude survey form were tried out before being administered to the student respondents. This allowed the researcher to modify items in the questionnaire that may need clarity of construction for better student understanding. The questionnaires on the thinking skills test that used an English narrative selection were also modified after the pilot testing for other university students not included in this study. The reliability value is 0.86 for the thinking skills test.

The student Attitude towards instruction and subject survey form uses the Likert Method of Summated Ratings (Best and Kahn, 2005), which is appropriate for this study because it deals with attitude scale. The statements in the form are designed and structured for this study. The survey form was administered to the students to gather data concerning their attitude towards teaching and English subject.

The questionnaires for the levels of thinking were then polished and approved by the adviser of this study. During the actual administration of the test questionnaires, the students raised no questions that implied they understood the questionnaires. The exam questionnaire was designed for an hour, and the researcher observed that the student respondents could finish the examination in one hour.

Ethical Considerations. To uphold the ethical aspect of the study, the researcher sought the approval of the English Department chair, the dean of the Graduate School, and the English teachers involved in the study before the conduct of the test. When the researcher was given the signal to administer the test, she informed the student-respondents that they would sign an informed consent to ensure they understood what it meant to participate in this research. The informed consent, based on the National Ethical Guidelines for Health and Health-Related Research, gave the respondents a choice of whether to participate or not in the said research. Respondents were informed that their names would be optional to ensure confidentiality and anonymity in reporting the study findings.

SCORING PROCEDURE

1. Student Attitude toward English

Response	Code	Description
Agree / Yes	1	Positive
Disagree / No	0	Negative

Numbers 3, 7, and 20 of the Student Attitude survey form are stated negatively. The codes are therefore reversed:

Agree / Yes	0
Disagree / No	1

The total number of items for Student Attitude Test is 20. Below is the range of scores.

Range	Description
18 - 20	Positive
14 - 17	Fairly Positive
10 - 13	Fairly Negative
0 - 09	Negative

2. Levels of Thinking Skills Test

Total number of questions	60
Total number of points	60

Range	Description
54 - 60	High
42 - 53.99	High Average
30 - 41.99	Low Average
0 - 29.99	Low

Levels of Thinking Skills	Points per Area
Knowledge / Recall	10
Comprehension	10
Application	10
Analysis	10
Synthesis	10
Evaluation	10

3. Thinking Skills

Each level of thinking skills such as knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation has the following points and description:

Points	Description
9 - 10	High
7 - 8.99	High Average
5 - 6.99	Low Average
0 - 4.99	Low

Statistical Treatment. The researcher used descriptive measures such as frequencies and percentages, and means for the critical thinking test, the student attitude towards English instruction, and teacher information or profile.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section starts with a discussion on the profile of teachers and students. The teachers' profile points out the number of years of teaching while the students' profile examines students' attitude towards English as subject and probes their levels of critical thinking. It examines the profiles of the teachers based on the number of years of teaching in English and students' based on their attitude towards English and their levels of thinking.

Teacher Information

Number of Years in Teaching English. This study has six full-time faculty members with varying teaching experiences. As shown in Table 1.1, the teacher with the lowest teaching experience is Teacher B, who has been teaching English for three years. However, before teaching English at Xavier University - Ateneo de Cagayan, Teacher B had accumulated many years of teaching experience in courses unrelated to English. Teacher A, with five years of teaching English, has extensive experience in written communication as a writer and editor for a publication firm before joining the English Department. Teachers D and F have ten years of teaching experience, while Teacher E has twelve years of teaching experience. Teacher C, on the other hand, has the highest amount of teaching experience among the English teachers, with twenty years. The overall mean for years of teaching experience is ten.

The teachers may vary in the number of years of teaching, but considering the latter alone does not establish the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. In other words, considering years of teaching solely as a criterion for effective teaching could not determine who among the teachers teaches more effectively. For instance, based on the classroom observations conducted by the researcher, a teacher with ten years of teaching can prepare as well as a teacher with 20 years of teaching experience. Moreover, the teacher with five years of teaching experience can be as articulate and clear in discussing the lesson as the teacher with 12 or 20 years of teaching experience. In addition, a teacher with ten years of experience can demonstrate an interesting classroom strategy in lesson presentations, as can a teacher with 20 years of teaching experience. The number of years of experience a teacher has does not guarantee effective teaching but stems from a desire to impart to students what they believe to be valuable, as stated by Bertrand Russell, a noted American philosopher. This can be traced to the attitude of the teacher towards teaching.

Table 1.1 Profile of Teachers according to Years in Teaching English

English Faculty	Years in Teaching
A	5
B	3
C	20
D	10
E	12
F	10

Mean: 10.00
SD: 5.97

Student Information

Attitude of Student towards English. As shown in Table 1.2, the test results indicate that the overall mean is 15.26, which is fairly positive. Of the 20-item test on attitude towards English as a program, 49.50% of the students received a fairly positive rating. 27.23% of the students got a positive rating, while 7.43% showed a negative attitude towards the English program. This means 15 out of 202 students need to be more interested in the English program. Although this number may seem small, it still indicates that the program needs to be improved to be more appealing to 7.43% of the students. This is understandable since understanding an English narrative requires stimulating the imagination and emotions. However, on a positive note, 96.04% of the students agreed that their teacher listened to them when they explained a point. This test item received the highest favorable responses among the 20-item attitude tests. This indicates that the teacher highly values the students' viewpoints. Ralph Waldo Emerson is known for his quote, "Respecting the learner is the key to education."

Table 1.2 Distribution of Students by Attitude towards the English Program

Range	Description	Frequency	Percent
18-20	Positive	55	27.23
14-17	Fairly Positive	100	49.50
10-13	Fairly Negative	32	15.84
0-09	Negative	15	7.43
Total		202	100.00

Mean: 15.26 (Fairly Positive)   **SD:** 3.24

Indicators	% of Favourable Response
1. This English class is conducive to learning.	93.07
2. Each student is encouraged to participate in this subject.	93.56
3. My teacher in English talks so fast.	89.60
4. This English class stimulates my mind to think.	94.06
5. I like to ask questions in this class.	52.48
6. The assignments given are interesting.	73.76
7. The teacher dominates the class discussion.	48.51
8. One real strength of this subject is the lively classroom interaction between teacher and students.	79.70
9. The subject as challenging and interesting activities.	81.19
10. I always feel motivated to learn in a literature class.	81.68
11. My teacher has good communication skills.	93.07

12. My teacher asks thought-provoking questions.	76.24
13. My teacher makes learning easy for me.	76.73
14. My teacher listens to me when I explain my point.	96.04
15. This English subject is the best subject I have taken.	22.77
16. I can easily understand my teacher's explanation.	80.60
17. I am free to express my own views in class.	89.60
18. I feel that I am an important member of this class.	81.19
19. I am satisfied with my accomplishment in this subject.	59.40
20. My teacher's performance in this subject needs improvement.	61.88

The survey results on student attitude showed that many students do not consider English their best subject. Only 22.77% of the students agreed that English is their best subject. A significant number of students, therefore, chose something other than English as the best subject. The word "best" may indicate "top-notch,""unsurpassed," and the like, but when referring to a subject, it may suggest "most helpful,""most advantageously," or "most pleasant," which may not be very acceptable for students. One implication derived from this result is that they need to gain more significant benefits due to the difficulty level of the English narrative selections in general. The local thinking among university students in this university is that English as a subject includes the study and analysis of narrative selections, e.g., literary pieces, which require higher-order thinking as they involve criticism. Thus, they usually take literary criticism in an English program for granted because they need more orientation considering the courses they want to focus on, such as engineering, agriculture, education, management, and the sciences. This suggests that the students may consider the subject as just one of the introductory courses they are required to take, and anything that is beyond one's level of comprehension leaves much to be appreciated. So, this applies to English as a required subject. The result of the study, however, does not point to the attitude of the teacher or classroom teaching technique because even if the teacher encouraged the students to participate in class (93.56%) or motivated their minds to think (94.06), the subject is still not the best for the students, which suggests that they are not interested in English as a subject. They may be good in English as a language for interaction in the classroom and other official university functions. Still, as a subject, it is beyond their focus of study because they are more concerned with their major subjects, which are still conducted in English as the medium of instruction in Philippine colleges and universities. This result confirms that the students' general appreciation of English narrative selections may still need to be developed, and they may need to be adequate and reach the mark.

In the academic setting of Philippine universities, students' inclination towards reading and discussing literary pieces and narrative selections could be much higher. This lack of interest can be attributed to the students' diverse backgrounds and programs of study, including agriculture, engineering, management, education, and sciences, where English as a required subject is not their primary focus. However, the thinking levels test involves using narrative selections, as stated in this paper's methodology.

The depth and complexity of English narrative selections are not just academic exercises but crucial for developing higher-order thinking skills. These selections demand deep thinking and understanding, requiring higher mental operations such as analysis and synthesis. This is a well-known fact among university students in English programs, as narrative selections involve criticism, requiring students to interpret, analyze, and evaluate. Understanding this role of narrative selections can enlighten educators and administrators about their pivotal role in shaping the future of English education.

Moreover, the limited application of English outside the classroom could also be responsible for this lack of interest. Although English is the medium of instruction in Philippine colleges and universities, students tend to switch to their first languages, such as Cebuano, Visayan, or Tagalog, once outside the classroom. It is important to note that the term EFL (English as a Foreign Language) applies to Asian countries where English is not the medium of instruction or official language in colleges and universities, such as China, Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, and Japan. In the Philippine context, English is a second language, and hence, the acronym ESL (English as a Second Language) is appropriate.

English has already become embedded in the Philippine culture due to American occupation for forty years. Even the less-educated or those who have yet to finish elementary or high school understand and speak broken English. However, the country has more than one hundred languages or dialects. Whenever researchers visit Manila in Luzon, for instance, they talk in English only because they do not speak Tagalog, the language of the inhabitants of Luzon. Many children and adults in the Philippines consider English their first language and Cebuano, Visayan, or Tagalog their second language. Books and reading materials are all in English, and all major and non-major subjects are in English. However, the application of spoken and written English is usually limited to inside the classroom among students or when there are important private or government functions.

The study results show that 93.07% of students believe their teacher has good communication skills, and 80.60% can easily understand their teacher's explanations. However, only 59.50% of the students, just over half of the total students who participated in the study, were satisfied with their performance in the subject. One possible reason for this dissatisfaction could be their performance in class, such as low test scores or grades. The study also found that less than half of the students (48.51%) feel that their teacher does not dominate class discussion, indicating that more than half think that their English teacher does most of the talking in class. This may result in a lack of student participation and engagement, leading to a less stimulating learning environment. According to Brookfield and Preskill (1999), teachers tend to unintentionally dominate classroom interactions with the approval and collusion of their students, leading to a less interactive and participatory learning experience. They suggest that teachers aim to create a more engaging and interactive environment to improve learning outcomes. Highly charismatic and passionate teachers often dominate the classroom, offering high entertainment value and rarely being willing to share the spotlight with others. Brookfield and Preskill recommend that teachers focus on helping students develop their understanding of the subject matter.

Teachers need to keep students engaged and active in the classroom to prevent them from becoming passive listeners, as Brookfield and Preskill (1999) suggest. In doing so, teachers should adapt their communication styles to cater to their students' diverse learning styles and personalities. It is also crucial for teachers to refrain from dominating the discussion, as this may cause students to lose focus and become disengaged. According to Gardiner (1998), students' attention span tends to drift after only 10 to 20 minutes, with up to 15% of their time spent daydreaming. Despite this, as noted by Gardiner, many professors (70-90%) still rely on traditional lectures as their primary teaching strategy. However, this approach may limit students' participation and hinder their ability to contribute their views in the classroom.

To encourage more interaction and learning between teachers and students, some educators are adopting questioning techniques focusing on higher levels of critical thinking rather than relying solely on traditional lectures. However, teachers must carefully consider the types of questions they ask, as research has shown that only a small percentage of class time is spent on questioning (ranging from 0.2% to 9.2%). The majority of questions asked by faculty (89.3%) only require recall to answer rather than comprehension of concepts. Only a fraction of class time (0.3% to 2.5%) is spent on questions requiring more complex evaluation skills (Gardiner, 1998). Recent research suggests that teaching students to ask and respond to higher-level questions increases their participation in classroom discussions (Cotton, 2000). As shown in the attitude test result, student participation has a 93.56 percent favorable response. This proves that students are encouraged in class to convey ideas and articulate points of view. It also affirms that verbal interaction between teacher and student occurs in the classroom. Johnson *et al.,* (1991) state that learning transpires through interpersonal interaction within a cooperative context, and individuals who work together create shared understandings and knowledge. Learning, therefore, can take place if students are actively involved in the classroom and if the teachers carefully consider questions requiring higher-order cognition. Gardiner (1998) encourages teachers to urge students to think critically and to give them activities that teachers believe will help them learn how to do so, thus increasing their involvement in learning.

Regarding teacher performance, 61.88 percent revealed that their teacher's performance in the English subject needs improvement. In other words, more than half of the students believe their teacher may still bring about much more effective classroom teaching. This result may be related to the student's accomplishment in the subject because 59.40 percent suggested that they are satisfied with their performance. This indicates that less than half of the students are dissatisfied with their class performance, which implies that the teacher may have to address this concern. Thus, to improve teacher performance, one must reflect that learning involves self-discovery and insight rather than being told information directly, according to Garlikov. Good teaching requires setting up situations that allow students to connect and see relationships for themselves. The manner of presentation is important, even if it needs to be more direct and descriptive. Instead of explaining something, effective teaching often involves getting students to experience something in a way that helps them learn (Garlikov, 2004).

The overall mean of students by attitude towards English as a subject is 15.26, a **fairly positive** rating considering the 20-item total score.

Student's Level of Thinking Skills. The test on levels of thinking has six categories: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Each category has a ten-item score. Table 1.3 reports that most students (91.59%) got an overall descriptive rating of low average to high average. 26.24 percent of the students got a high average rating, while 63.35 percent got a low average rating. The overall mean is 37.57, a low average rating, while the standard deviation is 5.78.

Knowledge and comprehension have a high average rating in each thinking category, as indicated in Table 1.3 below. The mean of knowledge is 7.91, and the mean of comprehension is 7.95. These results suggest that students' highest scores based on levels of critical thinking are traced to knowledge and comprehension. Knowledge requires recalling information and remembering previously learned materials to answer questions about who, what, when, and where. The skill involved merely allows for rapid recall of

information or facts. Knowledge of the critical thinking test administered to the students required them to recall information through identification by writing if the sentence was true or false. Students still determining their answers could return to the literary piece and thus have better chances of getting good scores.

Comprehension, on the other hand, requires students to understand ideas and grasp the meaning of the material through translation and interpretation. The students obtained a mean of 7.95 in comprehension, the highest score among the levels of critical thinking.

Table 1.3 Distribution of Students by Levels of Thinking

Range	Description	Frequency	Percent
54 - 60	High	0	0.00
42 - 53.99	High Average	53	26.24
30 - 41.99	Low Average	132	65.35
0 - 29.99	Low	17	8.42
Total		202	100.00

Mean: 37.57 (Low Average)
Standard Deviation: 5.76

Indicators:

Levels of Thinking Skills	Mean	Description
Knowledge	7.94	High Average
Comprehension	7.95	High Average
Application	6.89	Low Average
Analysis	3.67	Low
Synthesis	4.21	Low
Evaluation	6.95	Low Average

Range	Description
9 - 10	High
7 - 8.99	High Average
5 -6.99	Low Average
0 - 4.99	Low

The students' rating in knowledge and comprehension may be commendable because of the high average rating. This implies that students' thinking seemed naturally confident at these levels because they were within their reach or control. This research finding aligns with Wilen's (1991) study, which revealed that the majority of classroom thinking remains at basic recall and comprehension levels. However, these two levels of critical thinking, knowledge, and comprehension belong to the lowest cognitive domain, considering their order of difficulty based on Bloom's Taxonomy. Understandably, students scored high in these categories because the skills involved are simple. However, once mastered, they can eventually progress to more advanced levels.

Evaluation allows students to judge based on facts, examples, and specific criteria. It assesses the value or worth of information. Test A of the thinking levels examination on evaluation directed students to answer whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements and simultaneously write the reason for their answers. The same level required the students to assess whether the given statements were expressed or implied. The students got a mean of 6.95 in evaluation, **a low average. Still, such** a rating may be good enough for the students because evaluation is last in the order of difficulty and, therefore, the highest level of thinking.

Application has a mean of 6.89, a **low average** rating. The third level of thinking requires students to go beyond simple recall and demonstrate the ability to use concepts and ideas in specific and concrete situations. In Test A of Application, the students were required to think of an appropriate word to describe a person in the narrative selection, while Test B put the students in the situation of someone and their reactions to the problem.

The lowest rating is in analysis, which is only 3.67 and synthesis, which is 4.21. Both analysis and synthesis have **low** descriptive rating. Analysis requires students to see relationships, break information into parts and analyse how things work. Insights depicted in the selection and brief description of the type of plot were asked. Synthesis, on the other hand, allows the students to create a new body of information from previous information. Here, they put together elements to form a new whole, to create a structure or pattern that did not previously exist. It demands creative thinking. In the test, the students were asked about the chronological order of events as well as a composition of a 5-sentence paragraph to come up with a different narrative ending. The low descriptive ratings on analysis and synthesis indicate that students may need more practice thinking more profoundly and analyzing content more deeply. Questions during written tests and examinations imply considering more questions on analysis and synthesis during application exercises to enhance the student's thinking skills.

Students needed help analyzing and constructing the arrangement of the events in a sequence, hence the **low** rating. It should be noted that analysis and synthesis are indispensable in an English subject because answers are not merely limited to a word or phrase characteristic of knowledge and comprehension levels of thinking.

The students have performed well in knowledge and comprehension because of the overall **high average** ratings of 7.94 and 7.95. On the other hand, application and evaluation have **low average** ratings (6.89 and 6.95). The students can still develop on these two and have more practice in analysis and evaluation to improve their low ratings (3.67 and 4.21). As mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, teachers can enhance learning by using more questions and exemplifying analysis and synthesis.

A study conducted by Redfield and Rosseau in 1982 found that teachers who ask higher-order questions tend to have students who achieve at considerably higher levels. On the other hand, a typical student exposed only to lower-level questions may be expected to perform at the 50th percentile. However, students exposed to many higher-order questions may be expected to perform at the 75th percentile. Teachers can also write questions before the lesson presentation for better questioning and organization. Karmas (1990) asserted that teachers who write down critical questions before class improve their questioning and student involvement.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Teacher Information. The range of years of teaching English is 3–20 years. The overall mean for years in teaching is 10.00.

Student Attitude. Regarding student attitude, the majority of the students (76.73%) rated teaching and English instruction **fairly positive** to **positive**. The levels of thinking test, on the other hand, revealed that the majority (91.59%) of the students' levels of thinking range from **low average** to **high average**.

Levels of Thinking. Among the six levels of thinking, comprehension got the highest level, with a mean of 7.95. This is followed by knowledge, with a mean of 7.94. Analysis (3.67) and synthesis (4.21) got a descriptive rating of low among the of critical thinking. The

overall mean for the levels of thinking is 37.57, which is a low average.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

English teachers tend to ask less challenging, lower-level questions during interactions, focusing on information recall rather than higher-order thinking. The highest scores among different levels of thinking were achieved in knowledge (7.94) and comprehension (7.95). This suggests that teachers focused more on the lowest levels of questioning, i.e., information recall or knowledge and comprehension, during recorded verbal interactions. It could also indicate that students may need more training in solving more complex problems or tasks that require them to elevate their thinking to higher domains, such as application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The students scored high on knowledge and comprehension, indicating they did better in lower-level questions. However, they scored low in higher-level questions, particularly in analysis and synthesis. This implies they may need more training to improve their thinking skills.

Since the students' attitude towards teaching and English instruction ranges from a fairly positive to positive rating, this signifies a much closer look into the learning of English aside from knowing through the results that more than half of the students claimed that their English teachers need improvement. To enhance the thinking levels of students, teachers are advised to concentrate on higher-level questions, particularly in analysis and synthesis in examinations and classroom verbal interactions.

To develop better ways to improve the student's academic performance, aside from the traditional classroom lecture, teachers apply more varied and hands-on activities such as role plays, panel discussions, inquiry-based projects, class presentations, etc. Written drills and organized exercises may also be prepared regularly for students to deliberate after discussions.

To formulate questions effectively, college heads may hold trainings and workshops on levels of questioning for all teachers. Teachers should be familiar with lower-level and higher-level questions to enhance students' thinking skills. In formulating questions for term examinations, teachers may be encouraged to include the six levels of questioning to develop a comprehensive assessment of the student's academic achievement. Therefore, question formulation during examinations should be balanced on all levels of thinking. This way, the lower-level questions are not given too much emphasis.

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