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# INTEGRATING HOTS IN INDONESIAN HIGH SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE 2013 AND MERDEKA CURRICULUM

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***Abstract***

*This study evaluates and compares the integration of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Indonesian language textbooks for high school students under the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study conducts content analysis of four textbooks two aligned with the 2013 Curriculum and two with the Merdeka Curriculum employing HOTS criteria derived from Bloom's taxonomy. The findings reveal that the 2013 Curriculum textbook (2014 edition) includes 78 questions, with 17 in the analyzing category and 37 in the evaluating category (32 checking and 24 criticizing questions). In comparison, the Merdeka Curriculum textbook (2021 edition) presents 55 questions, comprising 14 analyzing and 32 evaluating questions (25 checking and 16 criticizing). Despite a decrease in the total number of questions, the Merdeka Curriculum exhibits a greater emphasis on deeper critical evaluation, reflecting a pedagogical shift toward fostering students' critical thinking competencies. The contribution of this research lies in providing empirical evidence on how curriculum reforms affect the cognitive depth of textbook content, thereby offering insights for curriculum developers, textbook authors, and educators in designing learning materials that effectively promote 21st-century skills.*

***Keywords:*** *Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS); 2013 Curriculum; and Merdeka Curriculum*

## INTRODUCTION

Education in the 21st century is marked by rapid technological advancement, fundamentally transforming not only how people work but also how they think and learn. One of the key paradigms in modern education is the cultivation of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), which enable students to go beyond basic comprehension and engage in analyzing, evaluating, and creating solutions to complex real-world problems. In the context of Society 5.0, where adaptability, critical reasoning, and creativity are indispensable, the integration of HOTS into national curricula has become a strategic imperative (Lie et al., 2020).

HOTS encompass critical, analytical, evaluative, and creative cognitive capacities that students must acquire to effectively navigate complex problem-solving and decision- making in dynamic contexts. According to the revised Bloom's Taxonomy by Anderson and Kratwohl (2015), HOTS are situated within the higher levels of cognitive processing namely Analyzing (C4), Evaluating (C5), and Creating (C6). These skills are deemed essential in 21st-century learning, as they push students

beyond rote memorization towards deep understanding, practical application, and the innovation of knowledge into novel ideas and solutions (Heong et al., 2012).

In Indonesia, HOTS are officially emphasized through the 2013 Curriculum and more recently, the Merdeka Curriculum. Both curricula aim to equip students with competencies aligned with 21st-century demands by encouraging a shift from rote memorization toward student-centered, inquiry-based learning. However, various studies indicate a persistent gap between curricular intentions and classroom realities. Research by Budiman & Jailani (2014) and Chandra et al. (2019) highlights that many Indonesian teachers continue to emphasize Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS), particularly in textbook-based instruction and assessments. Consequently, students often struggle to develop critical reading and problem-solving skills, as reflected in Indonesia's low performance in international assessments such as PISA 2018, especially in reading literacy and text analysis (Suprayitno, 2019).

The 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum were designed to improve the quality of education in Indonesia, particularly by promoting the development of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). The 2013 Curriculum emphasizes a competency-based approach that integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, with the aim of fostering critical and creative thinking skills among students (Yuliandini et al., 2019). Meanwhile, the Merdeka Curriculum grants greater flexibility to schools and teachers, allowing them to adapt learning materials to the local context and students' social backgrounds Sholikha & Fitrayanti (2021).

Textbooks serve as one of the primary instruments for curriculum implementation in schools. The quality of textbooks significantly affects the effectiveness of learning processes and the extent to which students' thinking skills are cultivated. A well-designed textbook not only aligns with curricular goals but also includes exercises that foster HOTS. Sholikha & Fitrayanti (2021) assert that quality textbooks can prepare students to face 21st-century challenges by incorporating tasks that demand critical and creative thinking.

Although previous research has examined the presence of HOTS in educational policy and classroom practice, studies focusing on the comparative quality of HOTS integration in textbooks under both the 2013 and Merdeka Curricula remain limited. For instance, Azis et al (2020) found that while HOTS have been integrated into Indonesian language textbooks for senior high schools, the distribution and quality of HOTS-related items remain inconsistent. Textbooks based on the 2013 Curriculum tend to be more structured in presenting HOTS tasks, whereas those aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum offer greater contextual relevance and flexibility. Nevertheless, both curricula still face challenges in achieving consistent and high-quality integration of HOTS that meets the demands of 21st-century education, which emphasizes critical and creative thinking skills.

Although HOTS have been formally acknowledged in national education policy, a significant gap remains between policy and practice. Research conducted by Hartini et al. (2021). indicates that many teachers in Indonesia particularly at the primary school level continue to focus on LOTS in their assessments. This suggests a need for improved teacher training and more robust HOTS assessment standards to enable students to develop higher-level cognitive abilities. Furthermore, although Merdeka Curriculum textbooks have begun to incorporate HOTS-oriented tasks, their quality and distribution remain uneven across regions in Indonesia.

In response to the demands of Society 5.0, Indonesia's education system must effectively foster the development of critical and creative thinking skills necessary to confront future challenges (Kemala, 2021). The 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum must offer more challenging learning activities that promote analytical and creative problem- solving, as well as real-world application. Doing so will better prepare students to face global competition and enhance the nation's competitiveness in the digital era (Widiastuti & Mbato, 2025).

The gap between previous research and the present study lies in the lack of studies comparing the quality of HOTS integration in Indonesian language textbooks between the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum. While several studies have addressed the general implementation of HOTS, most prior research, such as that conducted by Azis et al. (2020), has focused on identifying the presence of HOTS in textbooks without directly comparing the quality and consistency of its implementation between the two curricula. Moreover, previous research has primarily emphasized the structural aspects and presence of HOTS in the material, but few have assessed the depth and relevance of tasks designed to develop HOTS in alignment with the revised Bloom's Taxonomy. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by conducting a more in-depth evaluation of the implementation and quality of HOTS in Indonesian language textbooks for senior high schools under both curricula.

By offering a comparative analysis grounded in empirical data, this study contributes to the discourse on curriculum development and textbook quality in Indonesia. The findings are expected to inform curriculum designers, textbook authors, and educators about the strengths and limitations of current materials, and to provide practical recommendations for strengthening HOTS integration to better prepare students for future challenges in the global era.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) refer to advanced cognitive abilities encompassing analysis, evaluation, and creation, as outlined in the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl. Higher-order thinking goes beyond mere memorization or comprehension; it involves critically, creatively, and reflectively processing knowledge to solve complex problems (Faradella et al., 2024). King, Goodson, and Rohani identify three core components of HOTS: analysis (the ability to break down information, compare, and identify relationships among elements), evaluation (the capacity to assess and make judgments based on specific criteria), and creation (the skill to generate new ideas, products, or solutions). These competencies are crucial in 21st- century education, which demands learners to be active, innovative, and critical thinkers capable of navigating global dynamics. Nurhikmah (2024) also asserts that effective learning should enable students to engage in reasoning and reflection on various possible solutions, rather than relying solely on rote memorization.

In the context of formal education, textbooks play a central role in facilitating classroom instruction and delivering curriculum content. More than just repositories of information, textbooks also function as pedagogical instruments that influence how students think, reason, and construct knowledge. Therefore, the extent to which Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) are embedded within textbooks reflects the curriculum's effectiveness in fostering students' cognitive development (Budiman & Jailani, 2014).

To evaluate the presence and quality of HOTS integration in textbooks, the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy proposed by Anderson and Krathwohl (2015) is commonly

employed as a guiding framework. This taxonomy classifies cognitive processes into six hierarchical levels: remembering (C1), understanding (C2), applying (C3), analyzing (C4), evaluating (C5), and creating (C6). The last three levels analyzing, evaluating, and creating are identified as HOTS because they require deeper cognitive engagement and the application of critical and creative thinking (Heong et al., 2012). Beyond serving as a classification scheme, the taxonomy also informs instructional design, providing educators with a blueprint for constructing tasks and assessments that actively promote higher-order thinking. Accordingly, its use in textbook analysis enables researchers and educators to critically assess whether learning activities genuinely support the development of complex cognitive skills in students.

In relation to educational policy in Indonesia, the 2013 Curriculum (Kurikulum 2013) explicitly promotes a scientific approach, encompassing activities such as observing, questioning, experimenting, reasoning, and communicating. The Ministry of Education and Culture (2013) states that Kurikulum 2013 aims to foster students who are active in inquiry and capable of critical and creative thinking. In this regard, HOTS-oriented exercises in textbooks are seen as essential instructional strategies. Subsequently, the Merdeka Curriculum was introduced as an enhancement of Kurikulum 2013, offering a more flexible, student-centered approach that supports differentiated learning and deeper exploration of meaningful content (Marunduri et al., 2024). According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek, 2022), the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the development of character and critical, collaborative, creative, and communicative competencies. In this context, textbooks not only serve as content delivery media but also function as tools to actualize the curriculum vision through tasks that stimulate HOTS (Resty Panginan & Susianti, 2022).

More broadly, in the era of globalization and digital transformation, 21st-century education emphasizes the development of four core competencies critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity collectively known as the 4C skills. Among these, critical thinking and creativity are directly rooted in Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), which provide students with the capacity to analyze problems and formulate innovative solutions. The World Economic Forum (2020) identifies analytical thinking and innovation as two of the top ten most crucial skills for the future workforce, reflecting the urgent need for educational systems to cultivate these competencies in response to increasingly complex global demands. In this context, textbooks as primary learning tools must be designed to support the development of HOTS to ensure that learners are not only knowledgeable but also capable of adapting, creating, and contributing meaningfully in dynamic environments.

In conclusion, a synthesis of theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence underscores that the integration of HOTS within textbooks is a vital indicator of a curriculum's effectiveness in fostering 21st-century competencies (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2015; Heong et al., 2012). Given the pivotal role of textbooks in mediating curriculum goals and instructional practice, evaluating the extent to which HOTS are embedded in Indonesian language textbooks is essential. This is particularly significant within the framework of Indonesia’s ongoing educational reforms, such as the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum, which aim to shift pedagogical focus from memorization to critical engagement (Sholikha & Fitrayanti, 2021). Assessing the quality and consistency of HOTS integration in these textbooks offers valuable insights

into the current trajectory of educational transformation in Indonesia and informs strategies for enhancing future learning outcomes.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach, aiming to systematically describe the aspects of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) contained in the exercise questions of Indonesian language textbooks for senior high schools (Sugiyono, 2013). The main focus is on the evaluation dimension of HOTS, which involves decision-making processes based on established criteria such as quality, effectiveness, efficiency, and consistency (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2015). The research data consist of sentences or questions found in the exercise sections of the textbooks that exhibit HOTS characteristics, particularly those aligned with the higher levels of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The data sources are four textbooks: two developed under the 2013 Curriculum and two under the Merdeka Curriculum. Specifically, the textbooks analyzed include Bahasa Indonesia untuk SMA by Fadillah Tri Aulia and Sefi Indra Gumilar, published by the Pusat Kurikulum dan Perbukuan, Balitbang, Kemendikbud (2017), along with three other textbooks selected based on relevance, curriculum representation, and grade level equivalence.

The data collection technique used is docu,entation-, in which all exercise questions in the selected textbooks were examined and categorized based on their cognitive level according to the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy framework. The data analysis technique follows content analysis procedures, involving the identification, coding, classification, and interpretation of HOTS elements in the exercises. To ensure accuracy and validity, the researcher used triangulation through expert judgment and inter-rater verification. The primary instrument in this study is the researcher, who is responsible for collecting and analyzing the data. Data collection techniques include: 1) Reading Technique: Reading and analyzing the exercises to identify HOTS elements. 2) Documentation: Gathering and recording relevant data from the textbooks. 3) Note-taking: Recording findings related to the research focus.

Data analysis techniques consist of three main stages: Data Reduction: Selecting and identifying HOTS components within the analyzed textbooks. Data Display: Organizing the documented data into an easily comprehensible format. Conclusion Drawing/Verification: Rechecking the obtained data to ensure its validity and accuracy. Data validation was carried out through the following strategies: 1) Persistent Observation: The researcher conducted repeated observations to ensure the reliability of the data and the analysis, including reviewing relevant literature to deepen understanding.

2) Expert Triangulation: Involving education experts to verify the data and analysis results in order to ensure the credibility of the findings. This research framework is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the integration of HOTS in Indonesian language textbooks for senior high school, as well as the effectiveness of both curricula in fostering students' higher-order thinking skills.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study, guided by the formulated research questions, reveal several key aspects regarding the integration of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Indonesian language textbooks for both the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka

Curriculum. In response to the first research question, which investigates the presence of HOTS elements in the two curricula, the analysis confirms that both textbooks incorporate HOTS components. However, addressing the second research question regarding the differences in the quantity, quality, and consistency of HOTS reveals that the 2013 Curriculum tends to be more structured and systematic in presenting HOTS-oriented questions. In contrast, the Merdeka Curriculum demonstrates greater flexibility and contextual variation in HOTS-related tasks. These findings align with Azis et al. (2020), who noted a similar distinction: the 2013 Curriculum emphasizes formal structure and assessment readiness, while the Merdeka Curriculum promotes a more adaptive and student-centered approach. This comparative result contributes to the ongoing academic discourse on curriculum effectiveness by showing how curriculum design affects the nature of critical thinking tasks presented to students. The following is an analysis of HOTS questions in Indonesian language textbooks for the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum.

Table 1
Analysis of HOTS Questions in the 2013 Curriculum Indonesian Language Textbook (2014 Edition)

| No. | Chapter | Number of HOTS Questions | C5 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I | 17 | 6 |
| 2. | II | 13 | 6 |
| 3. | III | 16 | 7 |
| 4. | IV | 16 | 7 |
| 5. | V | 16 | 6 |
| 6. | VI | 16 | 5 |
| Amount | | 78 | 15 |

Table 2
Analysis of HOTS Questions in the Merdeka Curriculum Indonesian Language Textbook (2021 Edition)

| No. | Chapter | Number of HOTS Questions | C5 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I | 7 | 3 |
| 2. | II | 11 | 9 |
| 3. | III | 7 | 5 |
| 4. | IV | 8 | 2 |
| 5. | V | 13 | 7 |
| 6. | VI | 9 | 5 |
| Amount | | 55 | 14 |

Based on the data analysis presented in Tables 1 and 2 namely, the Analysis of HOTS Questions in the 2013 Curriculum Indonesian Language Textbook (2014 Edition) and the Merdeka Curriculum Indonesian Language Textbook (2021 Edition) this study affirms that both textbooks incorporate HOTS elements. Nonetheless, there are notable differences in terms of the number, quality, and consistency of HOTS integration between the two curricula. These findings reinforce those of Azis et al. (2020), who identified that the 2013 Curriculum presents HOTS questions in a more systematic and structured manner, thereby facilitating the gradual and consistent development of students' higher- order thinking skills. In contrast, the Merdeka Curriculum provides more flexible and contextualized HOTS tasks, which may allow for greater adaptability to real-world contexts but may lack the same level of structural coherence (Manalu et al., 2025).

***Analysis of HOTS Questions in the 2013 Curriculum Indonesian Language Textbook 2014 Edition***

Evaluation refers to the ability to make judgments based on predetermined criteria and standards. Commonly used criteria in evaluation include quality, effectiveness, efficiency, and consistency, which are often determined by learners themselves (Dewi & Novita, 2024) Meanwhile, the standards applied are typically quantitative. This study specifically focuses on identifying and analyzing the evaluation component of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) as reflected in the exercise questions of Indonesian language textbooks at the senior high school level. According to Anderson and Krathwohl (2015), the evaluation domain encompasses cognitive processes such as critiquing and checking, which require students to engage in complex reasoning and reflective judgment.

***Checking***

*Checking* is the process of identifying internal inconsistencies or errors within a product or procedure. This process aims to determine how well a plan is implemented. Examples of checking include evaluating whether a conclusion logically follows from its
premises, whether data support or refute a hypothesis, or whether the instructional content contains contradictions. For instance, the following data illustrates the application of checking in an educational context:

**Data 1**

"When living beings are classified into two groups plants and animals there is an assumption that humans are animals capable of thinking. What does this statement mean, and why is such an assumption made?"

For the example, students are expected to analyze the given argument, assess the consistency of the classification, and evaluate the validity of the claim regarding humans as thinking beings. Through this process, students develop critical thinking skills, which are an integral part of HOTS (Ariyana, et.al 2018).

**Data 2**

"For what purposes are conjunctions such as *while*, *whereas*, *next*, and others used in the report text? Explain and find examples for each conjunction within

the text."

The above excerpt falls under the checking process within the evaluation domain. *Checking* in this context involves examining or verifying a particular element. This prompt asks students to inspect the use of conjunctions in a report text. The instruction to explain their functions and find specific examples requires students to conduct an in-depth analysis of how these conjunctions operate within the text. This activity fosters both linguistic comprehension and analytical thinking, allowing students to evaluate how language elements contribute to overall meaning.

**Data 3**
"How many types of carbon are there? Can each type be further divided into subtypes? Explain and provide several examples!"

This excerpt also demonstrates the checking process, a core component of the evaluation level in the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2015). The question, *"Can each type be further divided?"*, requires students not only to recall factual knowledge about carbon types but also to critically examine their categorization and consider possible subtypes. This activity requires metacognitive engagement, as students must assess the completeness and accuracy of their understanding and provide justifications supported by relevant examples. Such tasks promote reflective thinking, encouraging learners to relate abstract knowledge to concrete contexts, thus enhancing conceptual clarity and transferability of knowledge. In conclusion, the checking process exemplified in this item aligns with the higher-order cognitive demand of evaluation. It compels students to go beyond rote responses by engaging in systematic analysis, supporting the cultivation of critical reasoning skills that are essential for meaningful learning.

***Critiqiung***

Critiquing refers to the ability to assess or appraise a product, idea, or performance using defined criteria and standards. Unlike general evaluation, critiquing involves identifying both strengths and weaknesses and often leads to constructive feedback. As Anderson and Krathwohl (2015) assert, critiquing includes both judgmental thinking and suggestive reasoning, fostering not only intellectual evaluation but also interpersonal communication.

**Data 4**
"Switch roles those who previously listened will now become presenters, and you will become the listeners. Additionally, provide feedback on your peers' work. This feedback may include suggestions, advice, or comments."

This instruction represents a practical example of critiquing. Students are not only encouraged to listen actively but also to deliver evaluative commentary on their peers' presentations. The requirement to provide *"suggestions, advice, or comments"* shows an emphasis on judgment based on qualitative criteria, such as clarity, coherence, and relevance.

**Data 5**

"If the text you received is not yet ideal in terms of the sequence of steps and linguistic features, revise the text so that it can truly serve as a guide for others to carry out the desired procedure."

Here, the task represents a synthesis of evaluation and application, as students are required to diagnose structural and linguistic flaws and then reconstruct the text accordingly. This aligns with what identifies as feedback-informed revision, where evaluation leads directly to improvement actions. The directive to "revise" encourages critical engagement with textual conventions, which supports the development of both metalinguistic awareness and textual coherence key competencies in academic literacy. These examples indicate that critiquing within HOTS tasks does not merely evaluate product quality but also stimulates dialogical reasoning, peer interaction, and self-assessment core skills in 21st-century education.

**Data 6**

"Read the text you have created so your peers can hear your opinion. Ask them for feedback regarding the content and language!"

This excerpt also illustrates an evaluative process within the domain of critiquing. Here, students are encouraged to seek responses and assessments from their peers regarding the content and language of their written work. The instruction to "ask them for feedback" underscores the importance of collaboration and peer feedback in the learning process. Through this activity, students are trained to develop critical thinking skills and to analyze the feedback received from others. In conclusion, the process of critiquing within the context of HOTS based education plays a significant role in fostering students' critical thinking and evaluative abilities. These activities not only encourage in-depth analysis but also cultivate the capacity to offer constructive feedback an essential skill in collaborative and reflective learning environments.

***Analysis of HOTS Based Questions in the 2021 Edition of the Indonesian Textbook (independent curriculum)***

Higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) involve the ability to make decisions based on predetermined criteria and standards. Common criteria used in the evaluation process include quality, effectiveness, efficiency, and consistency. While criteria may be determined by students themselves, the standards of assessment are generally quantitative. According to Anderson dan Krathwohl (2015) the evaluative aspect of HOTS encompasses two core competencies: *examining* and *critiquing*.

***Examining***

Examining refers to an evaluative process that involves checking for inconsistencies or errors within a product or operation. This includes examining premises, data, or supporting elements to ensure alignment with predefined goals or standards. In the Bahasa Indonesia textbook, several exercises require students to examine and evaluate the presented information.

This question prompts students to examine their understanding of the observation report by assigning evaluative tasks, thereby training students to assess the consistency and relevance of data with the observational findings (Junaedi, 2025).

**Data 7**

"Does the observation report above include: (a) a general statement about the observed subject, (b) a description of the object's parts, and (c) the usefulness of the reported object?"

Here, students are asked to verify the presence of key elements in the observation report, enhancing their critical evaluation skills in determining whether the text includes all necessary components.

***Critiqiung***

Critiquing refers to the ability to evaluate results or performance based on certain criteria. Students are expected to assess the positive and negative aspects of a text or situation and make informed judgments based on their analysis. Questions that fall under the critiquing category usually require students to engage in critical assessment, provide feedback, or offer suggestions for improvement.

**Data 8**

"Provide feedback in the form of questions or suggestions regarding the short story presented by your classmate."

This question requires students to deliver constructive criticism and suggestions about a peer's story, thereby encouraging critical thinking and in-depth judgment. Based on data analysis, it was found that the level of evaluative ability promoted in the indonesian textbook of the 2021 Merdeka Curriculum edition is relatively substantial, though lower compared to textbooks from other curricula (Suhady, et al., 2020). An analysis of four Indonesian textbooks revealed that the one with the highest number of evaluative 30 questions was the Indonesian textbook from the 2013 Curriculum (2014 edition), featuring a total of 74 evaluation-based questions.

The Indonesian textbook from the 2021 Curiculum Merdeka edition includes a total of 55 questions requiring students' evaluative skills. Of these, 24 questions pertain to the skill of examining, while 7 are related to critiquing. The examining skill involves analyzing key elements within a text such as information accuracy, adherence to standards, and data consistency while the critiquing skill focuses on critical assessment and providing feedback on a text or a peer's work (Sumadi, 2020). Both of these competencies are crucial in the development of HOTS, wherein students are not only expected to comprehend information but also to evaluate it critically and objectively. These findings align with Arikunto (2014) assertion that evaluation is a process that requires students to make decisions based on analysis and critical reasoning. Such skills are essential in training students to make informed judgments, assess quality, and provide constructive input in various educational and real-life contexts. Thus, evaluation serves as a key component in fostering students' critical thinking abilities. The reviewed textbooks indicate that evaluative questions especially those involving examining and critiquing have been structured to help students systematically develop these skills in accordance with HOTS standards (Wibowo, 2023; Yarun et al., 2023).

Comparative analysis shows that although both curricula aim to cultivate HOTS, the flexibility offered by Merdeka Curriculum allows for more innovative and contextually relevant HOTS tasks. However, this flexibility also results in variations in quality and consistency of HOTS integration, which poses a challenge to maintaining high educational standards. It can be concluded that Merdeka Curriculum, with its more flexible approach, holds greater potential for effectively integrating HOTS into instruction. Nevertheless, to achieve optimal results, clear guidelines and adequate training for educators are essential in ensuring consistent and high-quality implementation of HOTS based strategies (Purwaningsih, 2022).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of critical thinking aspects within Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Indonesian language textbooks for senior high school, it was found that the 2014 edition of the 2013 Curriculum textbook contains 78 questions, with a strong emphasis on the evaluating category, particularly the examining subcategory, while the 2021 edition of the Merdeka Curriculum textbook includes 55 questions, showing a notable focus on critiquing within the same evaluating category. These findings indicate a shift in the approach to developing students' critical thinking skills from a quantity-oriented emphasis in the 2014 edition to a more qualitative focus on evaluative and peer-assessment skills in the 2021 edition. Although both textbooks demonstrate substantial integration of HOTS, this study is limited by its analysis of only two textbooks and its exclusive focus on evaluating components, without assessing their practical effectiveness in fostering students' critical thinking. Future research is encouraged to involve a broader range of textbooks and to examine the actual impact of HOTS integration on students' cognitive development in classroom settings.

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