

HIGHER ORDER THINKING SKILLS IN READING EXERCISES: A COURSE BOOK CONTENT ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Higher Order Thinking skills are greatly required by the students to have good critical thinking skills in response to the continuously developing globalization era with its challenges. This research aimed to analyze the distributions of questions found in open-ended reading exercises revealing whether or not the course book is sufficient to develop students' critical thinking skills. This research used a qualitative method with content analysis to process the data found in open-ended reading exercises of English on Sky 3. Six cognitive levels (Remembering, Understanding, Applying Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating) of the revised bloom's taxonomy theory were used to analyze each reading question and then classified into HOTS or LOTS. The results showed that 6 of 158 open-ended reading questions (3.80%) belonged to HOTS, while 152 of 158 reading questions (96.20%) belonged to LOTS. Analyzing (5 of 6 questions or 83.3%) was the most dominant cognitive level. Meanwhile, evaluating had only 1 of 6 questions (16.7%) and creating even had no distribution. In conclusion, the distribution of HOTS which was lower than LOTS, demonstrated that the open-ended reading exercises in English on Sky 3 were insufficient to develop students' critical thinking skills.

Keywords: Content Analysis, Higher Order Thinking Skill, Reading Exercise, Course Book

INTRODUCTION

Course books have a great role in teaching-learning processes. A course book can be a guide for teachers as it provides a clear framework and knowledge. It is also one of the learning sources for students since it provides new material, texts, and tasks. However, teachers should be wise in choosing a course book. As Woodward (2009) claimed, often a course book is only a partial fit for teachers or students. J.C Richards (2001) also stated that it is possible that the course book has insufficient information and isn't challenging enough for both teachers and students. Consequently, course book evaluation is necessary, so the teachers are able to choose the right

course book or adapt it before using it in the class in order to fulfill the needs and condition of the classroom. There are many aspects in a course book that need to be evaluated, one of them is exercises. Exercises help students to master and improve their fluency of language skills. Therefore, course book has to provide exercises. It also needs to be evaluated to ensure that the available exercises are able to improve students' language skills.

Nowadays, reading ability becomes the most essential language skill for students who learning English as a foreign language (EFL) or as a second language (ESL) in academic settings (Grabe, 2010 as cited Indriyana & Kuswandono 2019). It is an important skill to be mastered by students so they are able to survive in English environment, both in education, work, and social life. However, reading is still considered as a difficult skill since it is a complex skill. Linse (2006) state that reading involves higher order thinking skills (known as HOTS). Knowing how to decode words doesn't mean we can read. Reading is more complex than that. In reading process, deriving meaning, analyzing, and synthesizing what have been read are also essential. Therefore, in order to be able to understand, analyze, evaluate, and conclude the text have been read, which means also mastering reading skills, students need to be taught and trained to have higher order thinking skills (HOTS).

The study of grade 9 students of junior high schools proves that Higher Order Thinking Skills contribute 68.6% to reading comprehension achievement (Sholihah 2019). Some other studies also show that HOTS has been proven to have a positive impact on students' reading skills. Hence, it is essential for reading exercises to contain higher order thinking skills. So that students' thinking abilities are improved, and they are able to comprehend reading texts.

HOTS are cognitive skills or thinking processes that are more complex than just memorizing, showing, and applying information. Students must think more complexly and use the knowledge they have acquired in order to think creatively, assess things, solve issues, and make decision. In other words, students must be capable of HOTS. HOTS in taxonomy bloom are thinking skills that involves the cognitive process of Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating. These three processes are more complex than Remembering, Understanding, and Applying (LOTS).

The researcher believes it is crucial to analyze the higher order thinking skills used in reading exercises from a course book. It because through reading exercises that involves HOTS, students may improve their thinking abilities and reading comprehension. Thus, the students are able to master the reading skill and survive in the English communication environment. Therefore,

the researcher is interested in analyzing the distribution of higher order thinking skill in the reading exercises provided by *English on Sky 3* course book for the grade 9 students of junior high schools to ensure whether the course book provide reading exercises that encourage the students' higher order thinking skills.

There are some previous researches on analysis HOTS in reading exercises. Research conducted by Melva Nurianti (2020) shows questions in the English textbook for senior high school of grade twelfth were dominated by understanding, one level of low order thinking skills. Moreover, research by Nadia Daniati and Fitrawati (2020) analyzed HOTS questions available in the reading exercises from *Bright an English* course book for grade 9 students of junior high schools. The results showed that the total HOTS questions were not dominant in the related course book. Besides, Fardina Ilma in 2018 analyzed the reading exercises in *Bright* course book for the seventh grade of junior. The results showed there are 11 questions from 70 reading questions that included in HOTS.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Course Book

Course books are collections of learning and teaching resources for a certain field of science. Course books are utilized in schools as a stimulus and instrument for teaching and learning. Moreover, Cunningsworth (1995:7) declare that the ideal way to see a course book is as a resource for achieving goals and objectives that have already been established in terms of the needs of the learners. Thus, course book not only roles as learning resources but also as reference source for learners on language components, presentation, and independent learning. Moreover, a course book role as a stimulus for ideas, syllabus, and support for teachers.

The Skills in Language Learning

The students must have skills in learning English. The students translate the target language into their mother tongue and speak only in parent language. Those students find difficulty to speak in target language, because of lack of practice skills in second language (Siahaan, 2022). There are four skills that must master in learning English as stated below:

1. Listening Skill

Listening is an activity that acquire information from spoken language. Listening is one of the

subjects studied in the field of language study and in the discipline of conversation analysis. This skill can be improved by practice and there are many rewards to develop someone's listening skill. It is the active process of receiving and responding to spoken (and sometimes unspoken) messages (Sulaiman, 2022).

2. Reading Skill

Reading as one of the most important skills to be learnt even it is difficult to understand (Siahaan, 2021). It is important because in reading the learners will be able to prove their knowledge from several written texts or books (Siahaan, 2022).

3. Speaking Skill

Neno, Y. B., & Siahaan, D. G. (2021) said speaking is an activity that involves two or more people where the participants are listener and speaker must act on what they hear and make their contribution. Speaking skills have to practice in daily life (Bouk, 2021; Pangaribuan, 2022).

4. Writing Skill

Writing is an activity that communicate to other people by using written language.

Reading

Reading is the act of getting or creating meaning from text. Reading is a complicated activity. It involves two skills; decoding and comprehension. In reading, not only students are required to be able to recognize words and how to pronounce them (decoding), they also supposed to understand and making sense of the text (comprehension). As stated by Linse (2006:69) that reading is a set of abilities that entails understanding the written word and determining its meaning. Reading requires the ability to both decode (sound out) printed words and understand what we are reading. Likewise, Johnson (2008:3) define reading as the process of deriving meaning from text.

In addition, Harmer (2010:99) mentioned three reasons for reading; for career, study purposes, and pleasure. Furthermore, He distinguished between two types of reading: extensive reading, which students usually do outside of the classroom, and intensive reading, which occurs most frequently in the classroom.

Moreover, based on J.B Heaton (1975:107) reading exercises can be divided into 6 types; matching test, true/false test, multiple-choice items, completion items, rearrangement items, and open-ended questions. Students' responses to open-ended questions are totally subjective. The necessary response might range from a single word to one or two lines.

Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

B. S. Bloom, M. D. Engelhart, E. J. Furst, W. H. Hill, and D. R. Krathwohl released *The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, The Classification of Educational Goals, Handbook I: Cognitive Domain* in 1956 as a framework for classifying educational objectives (Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. 2001:21). Then this framework well-known as Bloom's Taxonomy. Krathwohl (2002:212) stated that the taxonomy of educational objectives is the scheme for classifying statements of our expectation of what students will learn as the result of an instruction. The educational objectives are classified into three domains; cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The original bloom's cognitive taxonomy consisted of six categories, starting with the most basic to the most complicated: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation.

Later, after had been used for 45 years, Lorin W. Anderson and David R. Krathwohl revised the Bloom's taxonomy and released *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* in 2001. Like the original version, the revised taxonomy bloom has six categories. However, dissimilar from the original that used noun form, the revised taxonomy uses verbs. Gunawan & Palupi (2016:103) stated these changes were made to suited educational goals that imply students will be able to do something (verb) with something (noun). The other change made is that the sequence of synthesis and evaluation are swapped. The revised taxonomy reorders the two categories of cognitive processes with creation being the most complex. Research proves that synthesis is a more complex category than evaluation (Gunawan & Palupi 2016:105). Hence, the six categories in revised taxonomy blooms are Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating.

Higher Order Thinking Skills

HOTS is the way of thinking that consists of cognitive skills that are more advanced than just remembering, presenting, or applying formula. HOTS can be taught to students so that they are able to analyze and evaluate facts or information. Furthermore, students with higher order thinking skills will able to apply what they've learned to other areas, think critically and creatively, solve problems, also make decision.

HOTS are proven to boost student achievement and motivation. Through HOTS, students' English skills are getting better. They also become motivated and able to enjoy the

learning process. As a study by Teemant, Huasman, and Kigamwa from Indania and Eastern Kentucky Universities (2016, as cited in Nugroho, 2021:64) shows that students who were taught using HOTS had better English language skills. Likewise, the study by Carroll & Leander (2001, as cited in Nugroho 2021:65) mentioned that through HOTS, 95% students agreed that they enjoyed learning. Students' scores on comprehension chapter assignments also increased.

Anderson *et.al* (2001:204) subdivide six categories of Revised Bloom's Taxonomy into two types of thinking skills: Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) and Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). Furthermore, Brookhart (2010:5) states that the "upper end" of Bloom's taxonomy is thought to be higher-order thinking, which includes Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating.

Content Analysis

As claimed by Ary *et.al* (2010:457), content research analysis is a sort of study that is commonly used in education and aims to determine the characteristics of written or visual materials such as textbooks, speeches, television programs, newspapers, and other documents.

They also claimed that content analysis can be used to recognize propaganda, prejudice, and bias in textbooks, or to investigate various forms of writings errors made by students, also to determine the degree of difficulty of the content in a textbook or any other media. As well as determining the relative relevance or interest in a particular issue.

Moreover, in content analysis research, there are six steps involved. To begin, researcher determine the phenomenon to be studied. Then, choosing the media from which the observations will be made. after that researcher should create comprehensive and mutually exclusive coding categories to enable the counting of verbal or symbolic content. It is also important to train the coders to consistently implement the developed coding schemes and thereby contribute to the accuracy of the content analysis. Final step is analyzing data, which might include merely percentages and frequencies across different categories or more detailed reports.

METHOD

This study has a descriptive-qualitative design. The method applied in this research is content analysis or document analysis. As stated by Ary *et.al* (2010:457), a research method called content or document analysis is used to discovers certain characteristics of textual or visual

resources. In short, this study is descriptive- qualitative research that aims to describe a document, which is a course book, and discover the characteristics of its reading exercises.

The object of this study is the open- ended reading exercises in *English on Sky 3* course book for grade 9 students of junior high schools published by Erlangga in 2018.

The researcher requires two research instruments. To begin, the researcher requires an analysis card with information about the six cognitive levels based on the bloom taxonomy, as well as its description, verb, and example of questions of each cognitive level. The analysis card is utilized as a reference to help the researcher analyze the reading questions and determine their cognitive level. Next, the researcher needs a checklist table that helps the researcher to record reading questions from reading exercises and the cognitive level of each question.

In collecting the data, there are some stages carried out by the researcher. Firstly, the researcher reads the whole course book. The researcher only focuses on the reading exercises especially the essay and short answers item. Then researcher collects and lists the reading exercises of each chapter. All the reading questions are put in the checklist table. Next, with the analysis card as a reference, the researcher determines the cognitive level of each question and puts a check on the column available in the checklist table.

The next step, after gathering the data, is to analyze it. Researcher began with analyzed the data collected in the checklist table. Then, to find out the distribution of higher order thinking skill in reading exercises, the researcher counts the total of every cognitive level from the reading exercises and calculate the percentage of each cognitive level. Researcher used a simple formula to get the percentage of LOTS and HOTS distributions which is $P = \frac{n}{N} \times 100\%$. It means, to get total of percentage, the number of questions of a level in the revised taxonomy is divided by the total number of the whole reading questions. Next, researcher then compared the distribution of each HOTS cognitive level (Analyzing/C4, Evaluating/C5, and Creating/C6) to find out which HOTS cognitive level is the most dominant. Lastly, the researcher uses qualitative descriptions to interpret the data's findings.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The data of this study were derived from the book *English on Sky 3* for grade 9 students of junior high schools. There are 11 chapters in this book with a different topic for each chapter.

The total of all exercises in *English on Sky 3* are 200 exercises. The total includes all of the exercises that target the four language components and skills. Furthermore, 57 exercises out of a total of 200 exercises were identified as reading exercises. In this study, the researcher only analyzed the open-ended type of reading exercises such as short answers and essays. There were 17 open-ended reading exercises discovered among the 57 reading exercises. While the other 40 exercises are reading exercises type matching, multiple choice, true or false, completion items, and rearrangement.

After collecting and sorting the reading exercises, the researcher analyzed the cognitive domain of questions in the 17 open-ended reading exercises. Of the 17 open-ended reading exercises, there are 158 questions. Knowing how each cognitive level is distributed in open-ended reading exercises, the researcher can find out the distribution of HOTS in reading exercises in *English on Sky 3*.

The result showed the reading exercise in *English on Sky 3* only cover five of six cognitive level. Those are Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, and Evaluating. Meanwhile, the research didn't find any reading questions that cover the cognitive level of Creating.

The cognitive level of Remembering has the greatest distribution, which as many as 109 questions out of 158. Whereas, the cognitive level of Understanding has a distribution of 40 questions from 158 reading questions. Afterward, 3 questions out of 158 reading questions are categorized as the cognitive level of Applying. Since the three cognitive levels covered in the lower order thinking skill (LOTS) are Remembering, Understanding and Applying, the distribution of LOTS is as many as 152 questions out of 158 reading questions.

Furthermore, the distribution of HOTS consists of cognitive level Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating is only 6 questions of 158 reading questions. The cognitive level of Analyzing has a distribution of 5 questions. Meantime, only 1 question covers the cognitive level of Evaluating. Moreover, 0 distribution for the cognitive level of Creating.

Consequently, the percentage of the distributions of LOTS is 96.20%. Lower than the LOTS, The HOTS distribution is only 3.80%. It shows that the reading exercises in *English on Sky 3* are still dominated by LOTS.

The research's result showed there are 5 reading questions in *English on Sky 3* that cover the cognitive level of Analyzing. All five of these questions are found in chapter 7, which is divided

into two subchapters. One reading question is found in Exercise H of chapter 7, subchapter 1. While, Exercise D of Chapter 7 Subchapter 2, has 4 reading questions that belong to the cognitive level of Analyzing. Meanwhile, researcher only found one question belong to the Evaluating level question. It is found in chapter 7 subchapter 2 exercise H. The researcher's analysis of 158 reading questions of 17 reading exercises in *English on Sky 3* revealed no distribution of the cognitive level of *Creating*. Researcher discovered no questions that stimulate students to be able to create a new idea or concept.

In conclusion, out of the 3 cognitive levels included in the HOTS, the most dominating cognitive level is Analyzing (C4) with a distribution of 5 questions which is 3.16% of all questions in the reading exercises, and 83.3% of the total of HOTS questions.

In general, the questions of Analyzing level found in *English on Sky 3* inquire about how the author organizes the text as well as the text's underlying value. Therefore, students need to identify the elements of a story or material. This is consistent with the definition of Analyzing (C4) by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001:79) that Analyzing entails disassembling a piece of content into its component elements and figuring out how those parts relate to one another and to the structure as a whole. Students are also asked to identify the text's moral or underlying value. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001:82) assert that determining a point of view, biases, values, or intent underlying presented material is one of the cognitive processes within the cognitive level Analyzing (C4).

Furthermore, one question of Evaluating Level found in *English on Sky 3* are asked students to criticize or assess the benefits of the stories they read. One of the two cognitive processes within Evaluating (C5) cognitive level is critiquing. In their book, Anderson and Krathwohl (2001:84) describe that when critiquing, a student notes both the positive and negative aspects of work. Furthermore, they asserted that in critiquing, students evaluate the merits of an operation or product using predetermined or student-generated standards and criteria.

The last level in the revised bloom's taxonomy is Creating (C6). In the study, the researcher didn't find any open-ended reading questions in *English on Sky 3* included in *Creating* (C6) cognitive level. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001:84) mentioned that the objective of Creating (C6) is students are able to create a new item by mentally rearranging some components or elements into a pattern or structures that were not distinctly present previously. Out of 158 questions analyzed, there is no question that has the objective mentioned.

In conclusion, the data reveals that the distribution of HOTS is significantly less than

LOTS. The distribution of HOTS questions is just 6 out of 158 reading questions, or 3.80%. These findings are consistent with earlier research. The results of studies by Nuraanti, Daniti and Firtrawati, and Ilma all revealed a lower HOTS distribution, with a maximum HOTS distribution of 23%. This demonstrates that the open-ended reading exercises in English on Sky 3 course book are insufficient to develop students' critical thinking skills. "A balanced blend of low and advanced level questions will contribute to accompanying broad educational goals, equip students with information, and develop their capacity to understand and solve issues," (Freaahat & Smadi 2014).

Furthermore, this might occur as a result of how common and familiar the lower-level inquiries are. It is also easier to be composed than high-level questions. Russell and Airasian (2012:114) explain that students aren't frequently required to use their own words to explain concepts, apply knowledge to new contexts, analyze the parts of ideas or tales, or synthesize various elements into generalizations or conclusions in order to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of a specific course of action. The author also might consider the simplicity of lower-level questions to be used in the class. Higher-level questions take time. As Russell and Airasian (2012:115) said that in responding to higher-level questions, students require time to process their thoughts.

The results showed an imbalanced distribution of the 3 cognitive levels included in the HOTS. The most dominant cognitive level included in HOTS is Analyzing. While the distribution of Evaluating is only one question and creating skill obtains null distributions. This is in line with Ilma and Nurianti's research which shows that compared to Creating and Evaluating, Analyzing was significantly more frequent. This may occur since Analyzing is the first level of HOTS, making it simpler for students to comprehend and deal with (Igharia & Ghanayem 2020:239).

In contrast, the distribution of Evaluating is 1 question, or 0.63%. It could occur since one of the most crucial thinking skills is Evaluating, which makes it difficult to provide a response (Daiek and Anter, 2004:452).

Last, the most critical thinking skill is Creating. Daiek and Anter (2004:449) argued that Creating questions seem to be challenging to respond to. This may explain why the result of the study shows that Creating level has zero distribution.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The distribution of the HOTS is lower than the distribution of LOTS It is demonstrated

by the research results, which indicate that the distribution of HOTS in the open-ended reading exercise obtains only 6 questions out of 158 questions. That equates to 3.80%. Meanwhile, LOTS have a distribution of 152 questions out of 158 questions, or 96.20%.

In addition, the result showed Analyzing level has a distribution of 5 out of 158 questions or 3.16%. When compared only with the total number of HOTS, which is 6 questions, Analyzing has a distribution of 83.3%. Evaluating level obtains only 1 out of 158 questions or only 0.63%. Meanwhile, it is 16.7% percent when compared to only the total number of HOTS. Creating level has no distribution. As a result, the most dominant HOTS cognitive level in open-ended reading exercises available in English on sky 3 course book for grade 9 students of junior high schools is Analyzing (C4).

The researcher's findings demonstrate the poor distribution of HOTS in *English on Sky 3* course book. As a result, the English teacher shouldn't rely on the book's content. To ensure the exercises are appropriate for the student's requirements and levels, English teachers should analyze and double-check the exercises in the book. The critical thinking abilities of the students should also be encouraged. It is suggested to the author of English course book to come up with more exercises that may train the students to have higher order thinking skills, especially in the cognitive level of Evaluating (C5) and Creating (C6). Finally, it is proposed that the next researcher investigate more aspects and provide more valuable results.

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