

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Education is the main foundation in the intellectual and social development of a nation. Along with the passage of time and the development of the times, education continues to transform to ensure that every learner is equipped with skills that are relevant to the current situation and able to face future challenges. Education experts consider that currently the ability in high order thinking skills (HOTS) is needed by students. In the field of education, the concept of Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) has generated a lot of interest, especially when it comes to reading instruction. The research claims that a variety of cognitive skills, including reasoning, problem-solving, critical thinking, creative thinking, and decision-making, are included in HOTS (Susanti & Lailiyah, 2021).

HOTS refer to higher-order thinking skills that go beyond basic conceptual understanding. It involves students' ability to analyze, evaluate, and create something from the given information. Reading is not only about understanding texts literally, but also about the ability to interpret, analyze, and synthesize information. Lone (2011) said that reading is the ability to recognize and examine words in sentences and understand the information within.

In the Merdeka Curriculum that has been used as the current national curriculum, 21st-century skills remain the main reference in learning. In relation to Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), the students are required to be able to think critically and creatively in learning as also pointed out by ... about Citation by Lie et al, one of which is in understanding a thing especially while reading something. In the Merdeka Curriculum itself, learners' abilities are divided into several phase levels, which are A phase – F phase. During phase E or when learners have just entered the High School level, higher-order thinking skills are the main concern for every learner.

However, in Indonesia, the critical thinking skills of students in various levels of education nationally are still considered low. As cited by Lie et al., the 2018

Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results show that Indonesia is still at a very low level, ranking in the lowest 10 out of 77 countries with a reading score of 371. Comparing the 2018 results above, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey released by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for 2022 which has just been announced in December of 2023. The results of the test showed that Indonesia ranked 69th out of 81 countries, experiencing a slight increase in rank but a decrease in reading scores to 359.

Regarding some of the conditions that have been described above, we know that critical thinking is one of the most important things in reading. However, the implementation of HOTS in the development of reading questions has not been fully implemented. Several studies have been conducted to look at reading comprehension questions in textbooks used by students in schools. Most of the studies stated that there are more LOTS questions than HOTS questions.

Ripalga and Fitrawati in their research entitled "An Analysis of Questions on Reading Tasks in the English Textbook "Work in Progress" in Merdeka Curriculum" showed that 83.1% of the reading questions in the textbooks were LOTS (Lower Order Thinking Skills) questions while the remaining 16.9% were HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) questions.

Aside from books that only contain a few Higher Order Thinking Skills questions, in the development of Higher-order Thinking Skills questions, writers, especially teachers, experience many difficulties in developing HOTS questions. There is research that shows what are the difficulties faced by writers in developing HOTS questions.

In research conducted by Aini et al. (2023), it is known that the results obtained are that there are several difficulties faced by writers in writing Higher-order Thinking Skills questions. The first is the difficulty in analyzing the cognitive level of basic competencies. The author has difficulty in distinguishing the sentences contained in the basic competencies, whether the points are high-level skill points or not. The second is the writer's difficulty in formulating HOTS content

questions. Lastly, the writers had difficulties in creating and finding appropriate and contextual stimuli that could be used in line with the basic competencies.

Therefore, after seeing that there are still many teachers who have difficulty in making Higher Order Thinking Skills questions, especially in the reading element, and the quantity between HOTS and LOTS reading questions in the grade X "Work in Progress" book is still very far apart, the researcher intends to contribute in developing HOTS reading comprehension questions to increase the quantity of HOTS reading comprehension questions in the "Work in Progress" book and to provide an overview of how to develop HOTS reading comprehension questions for teachers who still have difficulties in developing HOTS questions.

1.2 Research Question

In relation to the background of the study mentioned above, the research question of this study is formulated as how to develop HOTS reading comprehension questions for E phase which is grade X of Senior High School?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The aim of this study is to develop a set of HOTS reading comprehension questions for Phase E aligned to the learning achievement of the Merdeka Curriculum.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by a theoretical perspective of Merdeka Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum comes as a response to the challenges of education in the 21st century. This concept is in line with the principle of lifelong learning, which emphasizes adjusting the educational process to the demands of the times (Widiani, 2020 as cited in Effendi et al. 2023). The government designed the Merdeka Curriculum with the aim of overcoming the long-standing learning crisis. Indications of this crisis are seen in various aspects, including low student learning outcomes, even in basic skills such as reading literacy.

Snow (2002) states that reading comprehension is a process that involves simultaneously extracting and interpreting meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. It is made up of four parts: the purpose of

reading, the reader, the text, and the activity. In this case, the activity can be done by giving reading comprehension-based questions.

Higher-Order Thinking Skills are skills that are necessary in one's development. Lie et al (2020) in their book stated that higher-order thinking skills go beyond factual knowledge. These skills involve the ability to process and utilize information in depth. People who master these skills not only understand facts, but are also able to use their understanding to expand and develop further knowledge.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives suggest that the relationship between the above theories can be used to develop questions in response to challenges in 21st century education nowadays. By investigating this relationship, the study aims to contribute in developing Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) reading comprehension-based questions.

1.5 Limitation and Scope

This study focused on developing HOTS Reading Comprehension Questions for the E phase which is grade X of Senior High School specifically the content given in semester one which is based on the book "Work in Progress" from Kemdikbudristek. It was limited to three HOTS questions per chapter and limited only to the development of the questions without trying them out to grade X students.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The result of the study is expected to benefit English teachers as questions to measure the students' HOTS reading skills and can be used as a reference to develop HOTS reading comprehension questions.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

A. Reading Comprehension

According to Howard (2006), reading is an interaction between the writer and the reader through writing. Snow (2002) states that reading comprehension is a process that involves simultaneously extracting and interpreting meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. It is made up of some parts: the purpose of reading, the reader, the text, and the activity. In this study, the researcher

is developing reading comprehension questions to contribute to questions development of the Merdeka Curriculum.

B. HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills)

High-order thinking Skills refer to a higher-order cognitive thinking process that students engage in. According to Lie et al. (2020), higher-order thinking skills encompass more than just factual knowledge. These advanced cognitive abilities enable people to process and apply information at a deeper level. Those who have developed these skills can not only comprehend facts, but also apply their understanding to broaden and generate new knowledge. This understanding raises the awareness of educators because the goal of learning should be more focused on enabling students to think critically so that HOTS can be effectively applied.

C. Developmental Study

According to Seels & Richey (1994), a developmental study is defined as a research framework that involves designing products, development of the products, and evaluation that meets the criteria of validity, practicality, and effectiveness. In this study, the researcher uses this developmental study to develop Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) reading comprehension questions.