

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Teachers are individuals who convey knowledge, skills, and values to students through instruction, supervision, and educational methodologies. As part of the broader concept of educators, teachers play a central role in formal education settings, where they directly interact with students to facilitate learning and development. Teachers are primarily responsible for the holistic development of learners encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions aimed at achieving maturity necessary for fulfilling their humanitarian responsibilities as caliphs on Earth and as servants of God, in accordance with Islamic values (Chasani, 2022). Meanwhile, Brady, M., & Kennedy, A. (2009) assert that educators significantly influence the intellectual, social, and emotional growth of students. They are accountable for establishing a favorable learning atmosphere, delivering instruction, evaluating progress, and facilitating the comprehensive development of students.

Vygotsky's constructivist theory (1978) asserts that educators function as mediators, enhancing students' understanding through social interaction and scaffolding. In the digital era, the role of teachers is evolving due to the integration of technology to improve learning effectiveness (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Additionally, educators are required to continuously develop their professional competencies through training and self-development in order to respond to the ever-evolving challenges in education (Sagala, 2013). The primary responsibilities of a teacher include designing lesson plans, delivering instruction, providing guidance and motivation, creating a supportive learning environment, enhancing professionalism, and conducting evaluation and assessment (Permendikbud No. 15 of 2018). According to Milne, J., & Topping, K. (2025), practically teachers also facilitate the development of various essential skills to support the comprehensive development of students, one of which is reading as a fundamental skill in the learning process.

Beside that, reading is a complex interaction between the text and the reader (Hughes, 2007). It means that reading is an activity of reading a text and decoding what is written about. Reading skills are the ability and skills, and readiness of a person to understand the ideas and symbols, or sounds of language in a reading text that is adapted to the intent and purpose of the reader to get the message or information desired.

While Smith and Johnson (1980) states that reading comprehension means the understanding evaluating utilizing of information and gained through the interaction between reader and author. It is a process of extracting and constructing meaning simultaneously through interaction with written language (Tayyehthe et al, 2021). Additionally, decoding terminology and applying past knowledge to create a convergent understanding of the text are also necessary for reading comprehension. Past knowledge is the most important determinant of reading comprehension because we add meaning to writing to derive meaning from reading paragraphs (Toyoda, 2005).

Moreover, Educators significantly contribute to the formulation of high-quality inquiries. They are tasked with designing questions that assess students' comprehension of the subject presented. The questions should be prepared to encompass all significant facets of the content. Furthermore, educators must guarantee that the inquiries are just and impartial, affording all students equal possibilities to exhibit their comprehension. (Mulyasa, E. 2014).

In learning, questions have a primary function as an evaluation tool to measure students' understanding, skills, and academic development. According to Arikunto (2012), questions play a role in identifying the extent to which students have mastered the material being taught and become the basis for teachers to adjust more effective learning strategies. In addition, questions can also be used to motivate students to be more active in learning and thinking critically in understanding the concepts being taught (Sudjana, 2010). According to Bloom in his taxonomy (1956), questions can be recommended based on cognitive levels, from remembering (C1) to creating (C6), which helps teachers in designing learning evaluations that are appropriate to students' ability levels. Thus, questions are not

just a measuring tool for learning success, but also a means to improve the quality of students' thinking and teaching effectiveness.

In the context of learning based on higher order thinking skills (HOTS), questions given by teachers must be designed to train students in analyzing, evaluating, and creating solutions to a problem (Brookhart, 2010). HOTS-Based questions encourage students to not only memorize the material, but also understand and apply it in real situations (King, Goodson, & Rohani, 1998). According to Anderson & Krathwohl (2001), HOTS-Based questions are oriented towards critical and creative thinking skills that are very much needed in facing the challenges of the 21st century. Teachers have an important role in compiling relevant and challenging HOTS-Based questions, so that students can develop problem-solving, decision-making, and reflective thinking skills optimally (Manah, N., & Al Hakim, M. A. (2023). With the effective application of HOTS-Based questions, the learning process becomes more meaningful and students are better prepared to face a complex and dynamic world.

In this Curriculum, the implementation of Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) has been introduced in many schools in Indonesia. According to Nugroho (2018, pp. 16–18), educating students through HOTS means enabling them to think critically and creatively. Students are considered to possess higher-order thinking skills when they are able to apply their knowledge and develop their skills in the context of new situations. Therefore, reading comprehension questions in the curriculum are increasingly designed to assess students' higher-order thinking abilities rather than their ability to recall information. However, in practice, many students still encounter difficulties in answering HOTS-based reading comprehension questions. Based on the preliminary interviews conducted by the researcher with several students, most of them admitted that they had difficulty understanding the overall meaning of the text, identifying implicit information, making inferences, and determining the author's purpose. They also reported that limited vocabulary, unfamiliar topics, and complex sentence structures often hindered their comprehension. Furthermore, many students stated that they tended to focus on translating individual words rather than understanding the text as a

whole, making the reading process less effective. They also revealed that they were more accustomed to answering literal questions than analytical and evaluative questions, which made HOTS-based reading tasks particularly challenging. These findings indicate that students' reading comprehension and higher-order thinking skills still need to be strengthened through appropriate instructional strategies and the effective implementation of HOTS-based questions.

In a recent study, Afida & Nursamsu (2019) found that by using higher-order thinking skills, students can think creatively and critically. It suggests that in order to complete the reading comprehension assignments, students must use their higher-order thinking abilities in more complex thought processes. This study is focused only on the level of competency cognitive of analyzing, evaluating and creating since that this level cognitive level refers to HOTS and critical thinking (Setyowati, 2019, 2021; Aghaei, 2018; Thomas, 2017; Zuhri, 2018; and Abadi, 2016) here are three levels of higher cognitive domains: analysis, evaluation, and creation based on Bloom's revised taxonomy. HOTS and critical thinking skill only happens when students activate in analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Aghaei, 2018).

This study aims to find out the differences and enhancing in reading comprehension levels between two classes given the same learning method of applying teacher's HOTS-based questions especially in private junior high schools and fulfilling their thinking skills to better understand written texts.

B. Research Questions

Referring to the background above, the research problem formulated into questions as follows;

1. How are the reading comprehension ability of students taught without teacher's HOTS-based questions?
2. How are the reading comprehension ability of students taught with teacher's HOTS-based questions?
3. How significant is the difference between students taught with and without teacher's HOTS-based questions in reading comprehension ability?

C. Research Purpose

In general, the objective of this research is to enhancing students' reading comprehensions. Specifically, it aims;

1. To examine the reading comprehension ability of students taught without teacher's HOTS-based questions.
2. To examine the reading comprehension ability of students taught with teacher's HOTS-based questions.
3. To identify whether there is any significant difference in reading comprehension ability between students taught with and without teacher's HOTS-based questions.

D. Research Significances

The findings of this study are expected to be useful and beneficial for teachers, students, and the school, particularly in enhancing students' reading comprehension through the implementation of teachers' HOTS-based questions.

For teachers, this study provides both practical and theoretical significances. Practically, it offers insights into the effectiveness of teachers' HOTS-based questions in improving students' reading comprehension, especially through a comparative perspective between two classes. It may also encourage teachers to apply and optimize HOTS-based questioning strategies in their classroom practices. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of teachers' pedagogical knowledge, particularly in understanding how HOTS-based questions can be utilized to enhance students' reading comprehension and promote higher-order thinking in reading activities.

For students, this research provides valuable learning experiences in improving their reading comprehension ability and in developing their capacity to respond to HOTS-based questions. It also helps students become more critical and analytical readers through exposure to higher-order thinking tasks.

E. Research Scope

This research is limited to find out the effectiveness of HOTS-Based questions in reading comprehension in English for private junior high school in two different classrooms. In addition, this research is addressed to consider in adapting reading comprehension ability with higher-order thinking learning strategies.

F. Conceptual Framework

The notion of educator (teacher) in a special sense is a person who works in the field of education and teaching who have skills and get an official teaching certificate who are also responsible for helping students reach maturity through the transfer of knowledge (Auliaturrahmah, S., et al. 2021). In simple terms, the teacher is the one who gives knowledge to the students. In addition, teachers in public view are a person who performs a specific education in places, not necessarily in a formal educational institution, but also in mosques, surau, at home (Djamarah, 2001: 31).

Reading comprehension is the ability to process text, understand its meaning, and to integrate it with what the reader already knows. According to Singer (1985), reading comprehension has been defined as an interpretation of written symbols, the apprehending of meaning, the assimilation of ideas presented by the written, and the process of thinking while deciphering symbols. Furthermore, reading comprehension is intimately tied to readers' cognitive abilities because comprehension is a byproduct of cognitive ability. This idea is also supported by Parera in Kahayanto (2005:9).

Strengthening reading comprehension have implications for significant improvements in learning other languages (Hermi-da, 2009; Yee, 2010; Woolley, 2011). By mastering reading comprehension, second language learners are expected to be able to improve their ability to learn English as a foreign language (Hedge, 2008). One of the most important factors in learning English, especially reading comprehension, is the need to accommodate Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in each step (Girgin's 2006; Krath-wohl, 2002; Moore & Stanley, 2010). The process of reading texts is also considered to require HOTS-Based questions to be able to understand, analyze, evaluate and conclude the information obtained

(Aloqaili, 2012). Weimer (2012) argues that HOTS-Based Question can be facilitated through reading activities.

Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) are the ability to think critically, logically, metacognitive, and creatively (Maimun,2018). Higher-Order Thinking is also called "critical" or "strategic" thinking, it can be described as the ability to use the information to solve problems, analyze arguments, negotiate issues, or make predictions (Wenglinsky, 2002). It involves examining assumptions and values, evaluating evidence, and assessing conclusions (Petress, 2005).

Based on the conceptualized theories above, this study framework poses that teachers' HOTS-based questions serve as a critical stimulus to enhance students' reading comprehension. To empirically prove this impact, a comparative study design is employed by involving two distinct classes: an experimental class and a control class. In the experimental class, the teacher intensely implements HOTS-based questioning strategies (analyzing, evaluating, and creating) during reading activities. Conversely, the control class receives conventional or conventional questioning types (mostly low-order thinking skills). Ultimately, by comparing the post-test reading comprehension scores between these two classes, this research aims to visually and statistically demonstrate the significant enhancement brought by the teacher's HOTS-based questions on students' reading comprehension achievement.

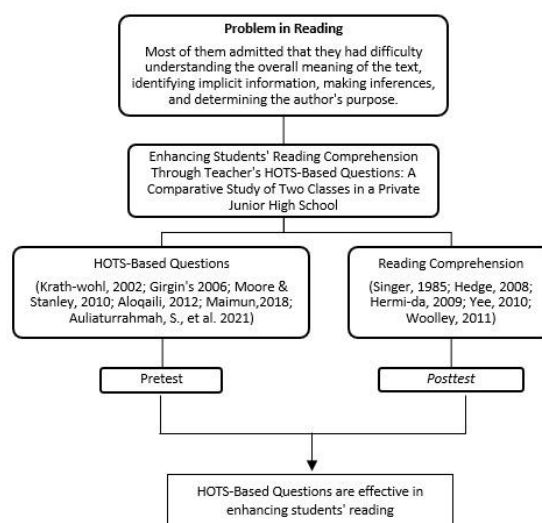


Figure 1.1

G. Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a speculative assumption about a research problem that has not been proven by the evidence collected (Arikunto, 2002: 64). This study involved two variables, namely HOTS-Based questions as "X" and enhancing reading comprehension as "Y". after this explanation, the hypothesis of the study is:

H_0 : accepted if HOTS-Based questions are not effective for enhancing students' reading comprehension.

H_a : accepted if HOTS-Based questions are effective in enhancing students' reading comprehension.

H. PREVIOUS STUDY

There are some previous researches on this topic. The first, research conducted by Munawati (2019), The effectiveness of HOTS (higher order thinking skills) in teaching reading comprehension. This research took place at MTs Darul Huda 35 Wonodadi Blitar with an age range of 13 to 14. The results of this study indicate that higher order thinking skills are one way to be used in teaching reading.

Second, research conducted by Merizka (2020), Higher Order Thinking Skill Questions in Reading Comprehension Test Constructed by English Teacher of Senior High School in Padang Pariaman Regency. The results of this study indicate that English teachers tend to write LOTS questions rather than HOTS-Based questions. For HOTS-Based questions, most of the evaluation questions were made by English teachers in Padang Pariaman.

Third, this research was conducted by Nourdad, Masoudi, & Rahimali, (2018). The Effect of Higher Order Thinking Skill Instruction on EFL Reading Ability. This research was conducted at the University of Tabriz (Iran). The results of this study indicate that this study can help in the effort of forming a better understanding of the using and instructing HOTS in Iranian educational systems and can specifically help to improve EFL learners' reading comprehension skills in which learners face serious difficulties.

Fourth, A previous study by Aziz and Rawian (2022) investigated higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) and metacognitive awareness in reading comprehension among university students in Pakistan using a mixed-method approach. The findings showed that most students had low HOTS and faced difficulties in managing cognitive and metacognitive processes. The study also emphasized that HOTS assessment can help improve students' reading comprehension.

However, the difference between current research and previous research is the location where the research was conducted and also the grade level which was carried out in eighth grade with an age range of 14-15 years. Then, this present study focused on enhancing reading comprehension skills through HOTS-Based questions. In addition, the previous research used only one class while this research used two classes. This research only used quantitative method while the other one used mix-method

