

THE COMPATIBILITY OF READING QUESTIONS IN THE ENGLISH COURSEBOOK FOR GRADE 8 WITH THE LEVEL OF THINKING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

Coursebook is an effective media which contains instructions to enhance teaching and learning activities. There are several reasons proposed by Robert O'Neill (O'Neill, 1982) in using the coursebook. However, the educators especially teachers have to be clever in choosing a good coursebook. Some experts have certain criteria in choosing a good coursebook, but mostly they refer to the curriculum. Curriculum is the guideline of the national education. Nowadays, Indonesia uses a new curriculum called K-13 which stands for Curriculum 2013. Moreover, the government has published a coursebook entitled "When English Rings a Bell". In the document of K-13, there is a competence achievement that should be achieved by the students in every level. The competence achievement refers to Revised Bloom Taxonomy (RBT) and the level of thinking skills which was proposed by Bloom. There are six levels in the level of thinking skills, which are remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating. According to the Curriculum 2013 – or K-13, the cognitive level that must be achieved by junior high school is in the domain of analyzing. This research would like to employ a checklist to analyze the reading questions in the coursebook. It is a valuable instrument to determine the cognitive level of the questions. In order to strengthen the data and make it valid, the researcher also applied data triangulation. The present study will analyze the compatibility of reading questions in the English coursebook grade 8 with the level of thinking skill.

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Keywords: *Reading questions, Thinking skills, coursebook*

I. INTRODUCTION

Questioning is one of the several ways to develop students' competence in understanding a text, and it is an appropriate strategy for the Indonesian Curriculum 2013. As we know the curriculum of the Indonesian education changes several times. The latest curriculum is curriculum 2013 or K-13. According to the K-2013, the purpose of teaching English is to develop the student's communicative competence in interpersonal, transactional and functional context by using oral and written English texts. As mentioned previously, in order to reach the purpose of teaching English at Junior high school, the students are accustomed to reading. According to Nuttall (Nuttall, 2005), reading is a process of taking a message out of the text as nearly as possible the writer puts into it.

Through reading, the students may discover several kinds of information from different types of materials, such as coursebook, magazine, newspaper, and others. However, the most effective material to achieve the English learning objectives is coursebook. Therefore, a good coursebook which improves the students' critical thinking should be available. There are some criteria of a good coursebook based on the experts' perspectives. Richards (2001) points out several criteria in choosing a good coursebook, it should consist of the structure and syllabus for a program, provide standardized instructions, maintain the quality and become more efficient, provide a variety of learning resources and effective language models and input, and interesting cover. He also mentioned about short training for the teachers. Another expert namely Brewster (2007) has a different thought on this. His criteria in choosing a good coursebook are viewed from the learner, teacher, and institutional and contextual factors.

The importance of questioning to develop students' competence has long been drawn by some educators. Therefore, there are several

researchers who have analyzed the relationship between reading questions and the level of thinking skills. Nasser M. Freahat and Oqlah M. Smadi (Smadi, 2014) mentioned in their article that the reading questions in Action Pack 11 & 12 at the schools of The Jordanian Ministry of Education and New Headway Plus Pre-Intermediate (NHWP) used lower-order thinking level more than high-order thinking level. Da En Lee (Lee, 2015) analyzed that the teacher's questions had the same result with Nasser M. Freahat and Oqlah M. Smadi that the teachers used lower-order questions more than high-order questions. They suggested that the teachers should consider, modify and renew the reading and teacher's questions in order to develop the students' critical thinking.

Moreover, Dr. Jack Truschel, E.P. (n.d.) in his article (Dr. Jack Truschel E. (.)) analyzed how to enhance critical thinking skills through the use of Bloom's taxonomy. He stated that there was a connection between asking questions and the level of thinking skills. Therefore, he suggested that tutors should try to ask the students by using high-order level questions to develop the students' critical thinking. Other researchers, namely Ayat Abd Al-Qader, Ahmad Seif (Seif, 2012) and Nur Pratiwi (Pratiwi, 2014), have got similar findings.

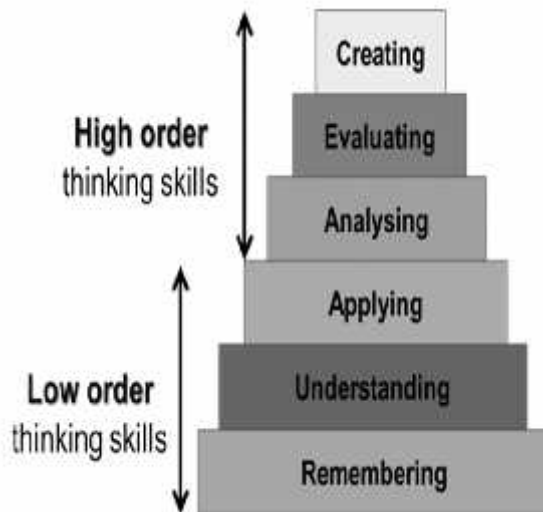
Meanwhile, Birch (Birch, 2007) pointed out that reading is a complex process when examined in all its detail since it involves a great deal of accurate knowledge and several processing strategies used to get the message of the text. Other researchers (Bernhardt, 1991) and (Lan, 2010) posit that reading is a cognitive process.

Cognitive learning is defined as the recall knowledge and intellectual skills which include skills to comprehend information, organize ideas, analyze and synthesize data, apply knowledge, choose among alternatives in problem-solving, and evaluate ideas or actions. As stated in Bloom's taxonomy on educational objectives.

Benjamin Bloom and Jerome Bruner are considered as cognitivists. Their famous measurement tool to determine different

thinking skills from lower level to higher level called as Revised Bloom's Taxonomy which was proposed by Bloom. The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (RBT) also used in the document of K-13. It is mentioned in the competence achievement of the document of K-13. The first three levels, which are remembering, understanding and applying, are the cognitive level that should be achieved by the students of elementary school. The first three levels are lower level thinking skills. Meanwhile, the cognitive level for the junior high school students is at the level of analyzing. The evaluating level should be achieved by senior high school students. The higher level, creating is for the university students. Analyzing, evaluating and creating are categorized as higher level thinking skills. It is the benchmark of the competence achievement. Yet, Bloom also proposed thinking skills for every dimension in the Revised Bloom Taxonomy.

The Level of Thinking Skills

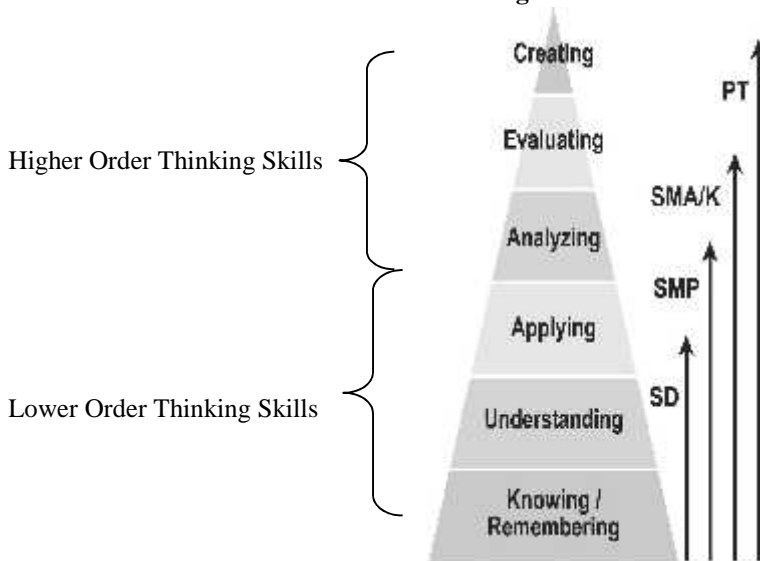


(Andros, 2012).

If we combine the competence achievement with the levels of thinking skills. It can be seen that elementary students is at the level of

lower order thinking skills and for junior high school until university is in the level of higher order thinking skills.

The Combination of the Competence Achievement and The Level of Thinking Skills



The first level of RBT is remembering; it is defined as recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory. The knowledge will bring back by questions such as, what happened after the ceremony?; and how many persons were there?

Understanding, as the second level, is more communicative. It is defined as determining the meaning of instructional message, including oral, written and graphic communication. In this level, the students are asked to interpret and explain more in oral and written by using questions like: how would you explain?: or, can you write in your own ideas?

Meanwhile, in the third level, applying is defined as the implementation by using a procedure in a given situation. It is the implementation of certain situations by using questions such as which factors would you ask if...?: or, from the information given, can you develop a set of instructions about...?

Analyzing is the fourth level of the RBT, it focuses on how to split parts and observe the relations of each part one another and to an overall structure or purpose. The activities will be how to differentiate, organize and group. The questions will be like: can you distinguish between a house and home?

The next level is evaluating. It refers to making judgments based on criteria and standards. The students are asked to check and critique statements based on a reading text. The questions will be like: what are the consequences of going home late?: or, what are the pros and cons of a carrier woman?

The last level is creating. It is putting elements together to form a novel, coherent whole or make an original product. Generating, planning and producing are the activities. The common questions are such as: how many ways can you do to make a kite?; or, can you see a possible solution to repair our bike?

Every level of RBT has different action verbs and model questions. The action verbs are created to facilitate teachers in creating some questions and exercises or analyzing questions for the students. According to Anderson (2001) the action verbs of the first level or remembering include choosing, defining, finding how, labelling, etc. And for the model questions, it includes questions such as who, where, which one, what, how, etc.

Meanwhile, for the second level of understanding, the action verbs are classifying, comparing, contrasting, demonstrating, explaining, etc. For the model questions, it uses states in your own words: which are the facts?; what does this mean?; etc. Yet, for the third level namely applying, the action verbs are applying, building, choosing, constructing, developing, etc. For the model questions, it uses predictions, such as what would happen if..., choose the best statements that apply..., judge the effects..., what would the result..., etc.

Moreover, for the fourth level or analyzing, the action verbs are analyzing, assuming, categorizing, classifying, comparing, concluding, etc. Additionally, for the model questions, some examples of that are what is the function of ...?; what's fact?; Opinion?; and, what assumptions...?. Furthermore, for the fifth level or evaluating, the action verbs are agreeing, appraising, assessing, awarding, choosing, comparing, concluding, etc. As for the model questions, is the examples are what fallacies, consistencies, and inconsistencies that appear?

Next, the last level or creating, the action verbs are adapting, building, changing, choosing, combining, compiling, composing, etc. And for the model questions, is the examples are how would you test...?; or, propose an alternative...; solve the following...!; and how else would you...?. Those are kinds of the action verbs and the model questions of every level of RBT which is proposed by Bloom.

The government has provided the English coursebook entitled *When English Rings a Bell*. There are the students' coursebook and teacher's coursebook. The purposes are to facilitate and standardize the content of the coursebook for the educators that can be used in the teaching and learning activities.

II. METHODS

This present study would like to analyze the compatibility of reading questions in the English coursebook published by the government with the level of thinking skills proposed by Bloom. Descriptive qualitative analysis was chosen as the research design since the researcher deals with analysis of the questions items of the coursebook. Gall, M.D., Borg, W.R., & Gall, J.P, 1996 defined qualitative research as a research which is grounded in the individual assumption in the form of meanings and interpretations to construct transitory and situational social reality.

The data was taken from the document of K-13 English Textbook entitled 'When English Rings A bell' for grade 8 of junior high school

(SMP/MTs) students. The researcher analyzed the questions by using a checklist. The checklist is a valuable instrument to determine the cognitive level of every question item. By classifying the question items in the checklist, the data will be acquired. It can also be used as the authentic evidence in a qualitative research (Rebecca K. Frels, 2011).

In order to ensure the validity of the data, the researcher also implemented triangulation. Validity is the important part in the research. It is worthless if the data or the result in the research is invalid. In the present study, the researcher applied data triangulation in order to strengthen the data and ensure its validity. There were three researchers to evaluate the coursebook. They used the same checklist. The checklist was used to analyze the comprehension levels of the exercises as proposed by Anderson and Krathol's Reading comprehension Taxonomy, which provides a detailed classification of reading comprehension levels.

The level of thinking skills in the reading questions of the coursebook are important to be evaluated. Especially, for the new curriculum called K-13 which applied the five skills of scientific approach, the students have to be more critical in answering the questions. This study evaluated the level of thinking skills of the reading questions by using Revised Bloom's taxonomy. There are six levels of cognitive domains: *Remembering*, *Understanding*, *Applying*, *Analyzing*, *Evaluating*, and *Creating*. The first three levels are considered as *lower-order thinking* level while the last three levels are considered as *higher-order thinking* level. The results of the data are described below.

III. FINDINGS

The first impression of the coursebook was that it has an interesting lay-out and cover. *When English Rings A Bell* which is published by the Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia for the curriculum 2013 has an interesting lay out. The cover is attractive and

colourful. Moreover, the design of inside part of the coursebook is also eye catching for the students.

The inside part of the coursebook is also full of attractive pictures. The researcher believes that it will attract the students and encourage them to read it frequently. The designer of the coursebook describes the topic in every chapter clearly in short statements. Based on the statements before that the coursebook has interesting appearance, however, the point of this present study is content of the coursebook, reading questions.

The coursebook employs K-2013. There are 12 chapters and *Let's enjoy the song* Section in the coursebook. It has different topics to learn. It employs a scientific approach by stating the steps clearly, which are observing, questioning, collecting information, associating and communicating. Therefore, the researcher believes, the coursebook will make the students easy and enjoy to learn English.

In order to answer the first question regarding to what extent are the reading questions in *When English Rings a Bell* for Grade 8 compatible with the Revised Bloom Taxonomy, the researcher analyzed the 262 reading questions in the coursebook with different types of questions such as essays, true/false, matching/composing, short answers, filling in the blank, column completion.

Table 4.2
Question Types in the Coursebook

No	Reading Questions	Chapter												Total	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		Song
1	Essay	-	-	-	5	4	4	6	25	8	10	4	27	1	
2	True or False	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
3	Matching/composing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	-	-	-	

No	Reading Questions	Chapter													Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Song	
4	Short Answer	28	28	27	-	12	4	12	-	10	-	-	-	-	
5	Fill in the blank	-	-	-	-	-	5	21	4	1	-	-	-	-	
6	Complete the column	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total		28	28	27	56	13	39	29	19	26	4	27	1	262	Qs

Table 4.3
Comprehension Levels of Reading Questions

No	Levels of Thinking Skills	Reading Taxonomies	Reading Questions (examples)	Compatibility	
				Frequency	Percentage
1	HOTS	Creating	<i>None</i>	0	0%
2		Evaluating	<i>None</i>	0	0%
3		Analyzing	What message do you learn from the song	79	30%
4	LOTS	Applying	Edo's notebook is ... with It has There is ... on the cover. It is ... with	46	18%

5	Understanding	Does each story have a happy or sad ending?	74	28%
6	Remembering	Who is the story about	63	24%
			262	100%

Table 1. The distribution of the questions in every dimension

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
Total	63	74	46	79	0	0
The percentage of every dimensions	24%	28%	18%	30%		
The total percentage of the level	70%			30%		

The reading questions which are presented in *When English Rings a Bell* were evaluated and categorized based on the six reading taxonomies defined.

1. Remembering

According to the criteria of *remembering*, it gets 24% with 63 frequencies. There are 63 questions which belong to the first level of reading taxonomy which requires students to retrieve, recall or recognize knowledge from memory.

One of the examples of the question is to get her students' attention in Picture 1 Chapter 1, she says...

2. Understanding

Understanding, the 2nd dimension of RBT which requires students to interpret and explain more in oral and written gets 74 or 28%.

One of the examples of the question is Benny is showing his friends the difference between the horse and the donkey.... (Chapter 7)

3. Applying

Applying is the 3rd dimension of RBT gets 46 or 18%. It requires students to carry out or using a procedure in a given situation.

One of the examples of the question is Udin is saying that his father is a goodman, because... (Chapter 8)

4. Analyzing

Meanwhile, *analyzing* which is the 4th dimension of RBT gets 30% or 79 frequencies. It requires students to observe the relation of each part one another and to an overall structure or purpose.

One of the examples of the instruction is write down in your notebook the speaker's statements about themselves in the past and at present...(Chapter 9)

5. Evaluating

Evaluating is higher dimension than analyzing. It is none of the questions in the book belong to this dimension. It requires students to make judgments based on the criteria and standards.

6. Creating

Creating is the highest dimension. There is none of the questions in the book belong to this dimension. It requires students to generate, plan and produce. The common questions are such as: how many ways can you do to make a kite?

The explanation of table I shows that very high percentages are scored for the lower order level thinking skills which was 70 %. Meanwhile, the other level thinking skills which are categorized as higher order level thinking skills is only 30 %.

From the distribution of the questions in every dimension, the researcher concluded that the reading questions in *When English Rings a Bell for Grade 8* are in the level of analyzing of Revised Bloom Taxonomy.

Meanwhile, to answer the second research question, Are the reading comprehension questions in *When English Rings A Bell* compatible for grade 8 according to K-13? Similar to the first research question, the researcher has counted up the questions in every chapter for every dimension.

Table 2. The Total Number of Reading Questions based on the cognitive domain or RBT in The Coursebook

No.	Chapter	Cognitive Domain of Bloom's Taxonomy					
		Lower Order Thinking			Higher Order Thinking		
		C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
1	Chapter 1	28					
2	Chapter 2		28				
3	Chapter 3				27		
4	Chapter 4	5					
5	Chapter 5	12			4		
6	Chapter 6	13					
7	Chapter 7		18	21			
8	Chapter 8		11	10	8		
9	Chapter 9		10		9		
10	Chapter 10				26		
11	Chapter 11				4		
12	Chapter 12	5	22				
	Song				1		
	Total number	63	89	31	79		

Total LOTS/HOTS	183	79
Percentage of LOTS/HOTS	70%	30%

The 2nd level or dimensions which is understanding has the greatest total number, 89 questions. Meanwhile, the lowest is the third level which is applying. The total number of questions in every level of thinking skills from level 1 to 3 was 183 number of questions and level 4 to 6 was 79 number of questions. It means that 70% number of questions belong to level 1 to 3 and 30% number of questions belong to level 4 to 6.

From the previous statements in chapter 2, it was stated that the 1st until the 3rd level of RBT belong to LOTS (lower order thinking skills) and the 4th until 6th level of RBT belong to HOTS (higher order thinking skills). Meanwhile, the competence achievement for junior high school students based on the K-13 is a little bit in the level of analyzing (mostly, it is from 1st until 3rd level, *see p.16*).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the reading comprehension questions in *When English Rings a Bell* are compatible for grade 8 students according to K-13.

IV. SUMMARY

To sum up, from the total number of 262 reading questions in the coursebook, 70% or 183 numbers of questions belong to the lower order thinking skills and the rest which is 30% or 79 numbers of questions belong to the higher order thinking skills. The result of all is the reading questions of the coursebook titled *When English Rings A Bell* are in the level of analyzing, and it is compatible with the competence achievement of the document of K-13 which states that the competence achievement for the junior high school students is in the level of analyzing.

V. DISCUSSION

This section presents discussions of the findings based on the previous sections. The first part is about the level of the questions based on the Revised Bloom Taxonomy. The second part is about the compatibility of the questions based on the K-2013.

Answer and discussion of the questions

1. **To what extent are the reading questions in *When English Rings a Bell for Grade 8* compatible with Revised Bloom Taxonomy?**

The result of classifying the questions items in the coursebook based on the cognitive domains is:

The questions in the coursebook are wellspread among every dimensions of *RBT* from the first (1st) until fourth (4th) level of thinking skills. As mentioned previously that *RBT* has 6 dimensions which are *remembering*, *understanding*, *applying*, *analyzing*, *evaluating* and *creating*. And the distribution of the questions are as follows, remembering has 63 or 24%, understanding has 74 or 28%, applying has 46 or 18% and analyzing has 79 or 30%. Therefore, it can be concluded that the reading questions in *When English Rings a Bell for Grade 8* are in the beginning level of analyzing. The result of classifying the questions items is in line with the document of K-13. According to the document of K-13, it was shown that the basic competence of junior high school for English is at the beginning level of analyzing.

2. **Are the reading comprehension questions in *When English Rings a Bell* compatible for grade 8 according to K-13?**

As mentioned previously, the researcher has counted up the questions based on the cognitive domains in every chapter. It showed that for LOTS (Lower Order Thinking Skills) portion took 183 or 70% of the total number of the questions. Meanwhile, for

HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) took 79 or 30% of the total number of the questions. K-13 document shows that for junior high level, the students must achieve the cognitive domain at the level of analyzing, which belongs to the lower level of HOT part. Therefore, it can be concluded that the reading comprehension questions in *When English Rings a Bell* are compatible for grade 8 according to K-13.

VI. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The overall findings of this study indicated that most of the reading questions in the coursebook were in the lower order thinking levels (from level 1 to level 3). Moreover, the higher order questions are not well covered. Even though the reading questions were already well treated or well distributed. It can be seen that lower order questions were 70 % and the rest were higher order questions.

Moreover, the questions are compatible with the K-13. It can be seen in the table, the total number of questions were in the level of LOTS and a few of analyzing or HOTS. Therefore the reading questions are match or compatible with K-13.

The findings showed that there was a great difference between the number of lower-order questions and higher-order questions. Therefore, the researcher suggests that the teachers should pay attention in choosing some exercises for the students based on the level of the students.

Thus, the researcher further suggests that schools or educational institutions should organize some workshops in writing coursebooks. Therefore, the teachers are able in making a coursebook for their own students by considering their students' level of competence and compatibility with the curriculum.

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