



An Analysis of Questions on Reading Tasks in the English Textbook “Work in Progress” in Merdeka Curriculum

Ripalga¹ and Fitrawati²

¹²Universitas Negeri Padang

Correspondence Email: ripalga811@gmail.com

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Abstract

This research aimed to analyze the distribution of the level of thinking on questions on reading tasks in the English textbook “Work in Progress” in Merdeka curriculum using Marzano and Kendall’s Taxonomy. There are three system or knowledge in this theory which are the self-system, the meta cognitive system, and the cognitive system. The cognitive system in this theory is divided into four level. 1) Level 1 or retrieval level, (2) Level 2 or comprehension level, (3) Level 3 or analisis level, and (4) level 4 or knowledge utilization level. Descriptive qualitative research design used in this research. The first two level, retrieval and comprehension, belong to lower level question while other levels, analysis and knowledge utilization, belong to higher level questions. The researcher examined all reading questions in this textbook and used table analysis to classify them based on the level of thinking. The results showed that lower level questions were found more than higher level questions. Although, higher level questions were also found in the textbook, their number was far below lower level questions. There are several explanation for why lower level questions appear more than high level questions. First, learning should begin from basic to more complex. Second, it can prevent students from being overwhelmed.

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INTRODUCTION

To deal with the challenges in the new normal era during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Education developed and implemented the newest curriculum which is called *Kurikulum Merdeka* or *Merdeka Curriculum*. The *Merdeka Curriculum* was created to encourage quality improvement and recovery from learning crises. According to Priantini et al. (2022) there are several advantages of the *Merdeka* curriculum. First, the *Merdeka* curriculum simpler and more in-depth which means the teaching and learning process in this curriculum focuses on the development of student’s abilities according to their phase and becomes enjoyable learning. Second, the *Merdeka* curriculum is more interactive. In this situation,

students are given the ability to actively explore, and discuss real topics like environmental issues while learning is primarily accomplished through project work. Then, the *Merdeka* curriculum is more independent. Students are able to choose what subject they want to learn and teachers can choose and design the resources or supporting tools for the teaching and learning process.

One of the resources that can be used by the teacher to facilitate the students during the teaching and learning process is the textbook. The textbook is a book that is used as a primary source of knowledge for academic study of a subject as well as a tool for instruction and learning (Graves 2000: 175). It is one of the components that can be used by the teacher to achieve the learning objective. As mentioned by Gak (2011), textbooks play an important role in teaching and learning. It can facilitate the students with the source of knowledge about what they are going to study. In order to direct and assist teachers and students in teaching and learning process in the *Merdeka* curriculum, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the republic of Indonesia developed and published new textbooks. One of them is English Textbook “Work on Progress” which was published in 2022. It is one of the newest English textbooks that is currently used in teaching English in *Merdeka* curriculum.

English learning in *Merdeka* curriculum for the tenth grade of senior high school students using genre-based approach. Genre-based approach defines as learning that is concentrated on text. Therefore, there are six types of reading text that the tenth-grade of senior high school students must study, that are descriptive, recount, narrative, procedure, exposition, and report text. It can be seen that the focus material in this grade is reading text. When learning reading texts, teachers use questions to measure students understanding about the text. By questioning, teachers help the students to think.

Moreover, Tofade, Elsner, & Haines (2013) mention that questions that are carefully formulated bring up new ideas, stimulate debate, and encourage a full investigation of a topic. Also, students may benefit from questioning to develop their critical thinking abilities because by answering the questions given, students will be encouraged to reflect and come up with an answer to the posed question (Fadhilah & Zainil, 2020). As a result, the questions that accompany the text become one of the important factors because from these questions teachers can see and assess the extent of students' understanding of the text. In addition, questions that are designed to help students in getting a deeper understanding of the subject will gradually stimulate their interest (Marzano, Pickering, Pollock, 2001). Therefore, the questions that will be given to the students should be able to hone their critical thinking. Moreover, Marzano, Pickering, Pollock (2001) mention that deeper learning is produced through "higher level" questions as compared to "lower level" questions.

Higher level questions refer to questions that require students to analyze information. On the other hand, lower-level questions refer to questions that simply involve the students to remember or recall information. Most of the questions that are asked by the teachers or provided on textbooks still assess the students prior knowledge or in the lower level.

The classification of high and lower of level of thinking was first introduced by Benjamin Bloom in 1956. As mentioned by Bloom (1956) the cognitive domains

were divided by two, which are Low Order Thinking Skill (LOTS) and High Order Thinking Skill (HOTS). However, Marzano and Kendall (2007) state that the Bloom's taxonomy need to be revised because from logical and empirical perspectives, Bloom's taxonomy's hierarchical structure did not hold together (p.9). As a result, Marzano and Kendall (2007) introduce new taxonomy.

The Marzano and Kendall's taxonomy goes a little further, which is the main difference of the new taxonomy compare to Bloom's taxonomy. It deals with a student's self-system, which includes their feelings, the significance of what they are learning, and their efficacy. Marzano and Kendall's mention three domains of knowledge, that are information, mental procedures, psycho-motor procedures. There are three systems of thinking mention in the new taxonomy, that are cognitive system, meta-cognitive system, and self-system (Marzano and Kendall, 2007, p.35). In addition, there are six levels of processing according to the new taxonomy, they are, retrieval, comprehension, analysis, knowledge utilization, meta-cognitive system, and self-system. The first four levels are included to cognitive systems which were later used in determining the level of thinking on reading tasks in this textbook. The first two level, retrieval and comprehension, is considered as lower level while other two level, analysis and knowledge utilization, is considered as higher level.

Moreover, every level on Marzano and Kendall's taxonomy has different cognitive processes. First, retrieval level is divided into recognition, recall, and execute. Second, comprehension level is divided into integrating and symbolizing. Third, analysis is divided into matching, classifying, analyzing error, generalizing, and specifying. Last, knowledge utilization is divided into decision making, problem solving, experimenting, and investigating.

There are some studies revealed the level of thinking on reading questions in a textbook, such as on the study by Sucipto and Cahyo (2019) which analyzed the the reading activities in an English textbook "*Bright 2*" for junior high school students by using revised Bloom's taxonomy. Then, with the same theory, Apriani (2019) carried on a study about analyzing High Order Thinking Skill on in reading exercise in EFL textbook "*Pathway to English*" for senior high school students. In addition, Laila and Fitriyah (2022) conducted a study on analyzing reading comprehension questions in English textbook. All of the studies mentioned, the previous research analyzed the reading comprehension questions on textbooks that were used in the previous curriculum which is 2013 curriculum. The study regarding to this topic, mostly used Bloom's taxonomy theory in analyzing the level of questions, while in this research, the researcher would like to analyze the questions by using the new theory by Marzano and Kendall's taxonomy.

In sum, the researcher intended to identify the level of thinking on each question on the reading tasks on the English textbook "*Work in Progress*" using Manzano and Kendall's taxonomy. It is mentioned above that the *merdeka* curriculum is the current curriculum in Indonesian education. Also, the textbook, "*Work in Progress*", that was used as a subject on this study is the newest textbook used to assist teaching and learning English in the current curriculum. Therefore, it is necessary to do a research in this regard.

METHOD

The researcher used quantitative descriptive research method in this research because the result of this study would be in the forms of numbers. In quantitative descriptive research, phenomenons that may be observed numerically are examined, described, and explained in order to form conclusions. Creswell (2014) mention that qualitative research design is used in analyzing numerical data collected by the researchers to address their study concerns.

In addition, the subject of this study was the English textbook “Work in Progress” for the tenth grade of senior high school students in *Merdeka* curriculum which was published by the ministry of education of Indonesia. This study focused on determining the level of thinking of questions on the reading tasks in the English textbook “Work in Progress” by using the new taxonomy by Marzano and Kendall’s theory. In this textbook, there are six chapters and some reading tasks in each chapter. There are 14 reading tasks with 77 questions in total in this textbook.

The instrument used in this study was a table analysis. The researcher created an analysis table to determine the level of thinking of questions on the reading tasks in the English textbook “Work in Progress” by using the new taxonomy by Marzano and Kendall’s theory. The indicators used in determining the level of thinking were created by understanding the four level on cognitive system of Marzano and Kendall’s taxonomy. . In addition, to ensure that the data was reliable or not, the data collected was checked also by another rater who is a lecturer in English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang.

The researcher listed all reading questions from the textbook and put them together on the table analysis. Next, the researcher analyzed the level of thinking of the questions. Then, the researcher counted and calculated the distribution of every level of thinking of the reading questions in the textbook in percentages. The formula looks as follows:

$$P = F / N \times 100\%$$

Notes:

P: Percentage

F: Frequency of questions at each level

N: The total number

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are six chapters with 14 reading tasks that have a total of 77 questions in this textbook. The distribution of the cognitive levels of Marzano and Kendall’s taxonomy on reading exercise in this textbook can be seen as follows:

Table 1. The distribution of The Level of Thinking

No.	Level of Thinking	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Level 1: Retrieval	46	59.8%
2.	Level 2: Comprehension	18	23.3%
3.	Level 3: Analysis	13	16.9%
4.	Level 4: Knowledge Utilization	0	0
Total		77	100%

Based on the table above, the total of questions at level 1 or retrieval level is 46 questions or 59.8% of the total questions. This level appears the most in the reading questions compared to the other levels. Next, for level 2 or comprehension level, the number of questions in this level is 18 questions or 23.3 % of the total questions. Then, the total number for questions at level 3 or analysis level is 13 questions or 16.2% of the total questions. Moreover, as shown in the table above, there is no question that is at level 4 or knowledge utilization level. In sum, if we classified those question into lower level and higher level questions, it is found that lower level questions appeared more than higher level questions. The distribution of lower level questions and higher level question can be seen as follows:

Table 2 The Distribution of Lever Level and Higher Level Question

No.	Questions' Level	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Lower Level Question	64	83.1%
2.	Higher Level Question	13	16.9%
Total		77	100%

From the table above, it can be seen that that 83.1% of the total reading questions in the English textbook “Work in Progress” is at lower level questions. Then, only 16.9% of the total reading questions is at higher level. The explanation of every processes on each level of thinking can be seen as follows:

1. Retrieval Level Questions

As mentioned above, there are three processes in retrieval level which are, recognizing, recalling, and executing. It can be seen *from table 1* that there are 46 questions that belong to retrieval level. 18 out of 46 questions or 39.1% the of total questions at level 1 or retrieval level belong to recalling which is far below recalling. Then, 28 out of 46 questions or 60.9% of the total question at this level belong to recognizing which is appeared to be the most in this level. Moreover, there is no questions that fit the criteria of executing because executing related to how the students use, demonstrate, or perform procedures (Marzano and Kendall, 2007). The following are some example of retrieval level questions:

Picture 1. Let's Read, Task 3, Chapter 1

cannot figure out how to stop Ronaldo from making a goal. Normal football players will use their single leg of their dominant side body, i.e. players of right-handed or left-handed use their respective legs to score goals but Ronaldo can easily use both of his legs efficiently to make goals. In addition to that, he can use his head to score goals as well.

He is also one of the fastest football players in football history. Ronaldo can run very fast, he can run with a speed of 33.6 kilometers per hour. That is why he is also known as a rocket man. This helps Ronaldo to do his famous free-kick. Ronaldo's free-kick speed is approximately 130 kilometers per hour.



Question number 3. how did he get known as a rocket man? (Let's read, page 11)

The question above asks students to generate information from the text. In addition, the question above asks the students the state the reason why Christian Ronaldo get the title a “rocket man”. It this shown on the figure 1 that the answer of this question is clearly stated in paragraph 3, line 3 to 4. In answering this question, the student don’t need to analyze the whole text or understand the main point of the text. That is why the researcher put this question into recalling because it fits the criteria of recalling.

Picture 2. *Let’s Read, Task 3, Chapter 3*



Question number 1. *In order to lose weight, you need to avoid a sedentary lifestyle and begin to around. (Let’s Complete It, page 64)*

This task asks the students to complete the sentences provided by selecting one word from the text. There are five incomplete sentences provided in this task which means there are five words also need to be find by the students from the text. In order to complete this task, the students have to recognize the words provided and select the correct words based on the text. The researcher decided to put this tasks into recognizing in level 1 or retrieval level because it matches the criteria of recognizing which are recognize (from a list) and select (from a list). As mention by Marzano and Kendall’s (2007) the process of recognizing includes a process in which someone is able to identify, recognize, and choose provided information from a list. This level does not require the students to think critically.

The researcher decided to put 46 questions from the at this level because those questions fit the criteria at retrieval level, such as name, label, identify (from a list), select form a list, generate information on demand, and determine whether provided information is true, false or unknown. Questions at this level only assess students’ prior knowledge. That is why questions at this level belong to lower level questions.

2. *Comprehension Level Questions*

From *tabel 1*, it is shown that that 18 out of 77 questions or 23.3% of the total is in comprehension level. The level 2 or comprehension level is divided into two processes two which are integrating and symbolizing. The researcher found that all questions at level 2 or comprehension level belong to integrating. The finding shows integrating is the only cognitive process of level 2 or comprehension level that can be found on the textbook. In addition, there is no question that requires students to symbolize, illustrate, or make diagram which are the criteria of symbolizing. The following are some examples of comprehension level question:

Picture 3. Let's Read, Task 3, Chapter 1

Cristiano Ronaldo

Cristiano Ronaldo has very strong determination. He used to train very hard since his childhood. He knew that a footballer requires good stamina because a football match requires a player to run at least 10 kilometers in a single match. Sometimes, he even trained himself continuously from morning until evening. He also challenged himself by playing along with older players.

He becomes so skillful and confident that his opponents cannot figure out how to stop Ronaldo from making a goal. Normal football players will use their single leg of their

Question number 1. What is the main idea of the text? (Let's Read, page 12)

This questions is sample questions of integrating from the textbook in chapter 1. This question requires students to find the main idea of the text. In determining the main idea of the text the students need to get through the whole text and find the keys part of the text. It can be seen from **picture 3** that the text starts with the description of the ability of Cristiano Ronaldo. After analyzing this question, the researcher decided to include this questions into comprehension level because this question not only requires the students to recognize the information or just state the information, instead this questions asks the student what is overall text talked about.

Picture 4. Read and Answer, Task 3, Chapter 6

Little Red Riding Hood
(Traditional Version)

One day, Little Red Riding Hood's mother gave her a basket with some cake inside and told her to walk through the forest to the other side where her grandmother lay sick in bed.

"Remember not to talk to strangers!" Little Red Riding Hood's mother said.

On the way to her grandmother's house, Little Red Riding Hood met the Big Bad Wolf.



Picture 6.9 Red Riding Hood
(Traditional version)

Question number 1. Why did Little Red Riding Hood walk through the forest? (Read and Answer Part 1, page 136)

This question demand the student to find the key part of paragraph one from the text. In order two answer this question, the students need to know the main point of the first paragraph. This question asks the students to find a reason of an action that has been done by a character of the story. the researcher put this question at level 2 or comprehension level because students need to find the main point or the key part of the paragraph which is one of the criteria in integrating. Also, from **picture 4**, it can be seen that the answer is not directly can be taken from the text.

From the explanation above, it can be seen that only some example presented. There are some questions that have the same criteria with one and another. That is why the researcher does not include all of the sample question. In sum, questions at level 2 or comprehension level require students to describe about how and why, summarize and paraphrase, and describe the key parts of ideas. The same with retrieval level, comprehension level also belong to lower level question.

3. Analysis Level Questions

It is shown on the *table 1* that the level 3 or analysis level has least portion among all level of thinking of Marzano and Kendall's taxonomy in this textbook. The researcher found 13 out of 77 or 16.9% reading questions in the English textbook "Work in Progress" at level 3 or analysis level. The level 3 or analysis level is divided into five categories which are specifying, generalizing, analyzing errors, classifying, and matching but there are only 3 processes that appeared on reading questions in this textbook. There are 2 questions or 15.4% of the total questions at analysis level that belong to classifying. Next, 5 questions or 38.5% of the total questions belong to generalizing. Then, 6 questions or 46.1% of the total question belong to specifying level. There is no question that fits the criteria of matching and analyzing error in this textbook. The following are some examples of analysis level questions:

Picture 5. Read and Rearrange, Task 3, Chapter 2

The game continued scoreless up until the half time interval, but as the second half of the game started, the intensity of the game increased. In the meanwhile, I was getting nervous in the stadium because my team wasn't exactly playing up to our expectations. In fact, my team was lucky to survive a few scoring chances from the opponent team. Then, suddenly, the ball was passed to the main "striker" of my favorite team from nowhere, and a goal was scored by my team, leaving the supporters of my team completely ecstatic and crazy with the feeling of a possible victory. And, in the end, we were indeed the victorious team.

Anyway, I consider this match to be interesting because we never know which team is going to win. Besides, I consider this match exciting also because it attracts supporters from all over my country. Finally, it is also interesting because no other sporting event makes us as emotional as this one.

I like football, whether it is played between two international teams or local teams, as long as the

Task 3, Part A. Andi is writing about his experience of watching a football match. In pairs, rearrange the paragraphs into a meaningful text. (Read and Rearrange, page 34-36)

After analyzing this task, the researcher decided to put this question into classifying at level 3 because in answering this question students need critical thinking skills. In this tasks, students need to organize unorganized paragraph into meaningful text. Also, they need to classify and identify main and supporting information in order to finish this task. In addition, organizing ideas including identifying the main and supporting details of the ideas is the criteria of classifying. Therefore, the researcher determine this question as classifying.

Picture 6. Let's Read, Task 3 chapter 3

5. Eat at The Dining Table, Not in Your Car or at Your Desk

Always try to eat at a proper dining table. Never eat in your car or at your desk. When you make a point to sit down at a table and focus on your meal, you will be less likely to

Chapter 4 Healthy Foods

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Question number 5. Which tip/s that is easiest for you to follow? Why? (Let's Answer, page 87)

The reason why this question is at level 3 or analysis level is because this question ask the students to state ideas based on their opinion not based on what is written on the text. After analyzing this question, the researcher found out that this question is included into generalizing because it fits the remark on this category which is elaborating ideas to make new generalization.

Picture 7. Let's Read, Task 5 chapter 5



Question number 1. Why do you think they write the post? (Let's Discuss, 117)

The question above is one of the example of questions that is included into specifying at level 3 or analysis level. This question requires students to make a judgment of why the writers write the post. The answer of this question is based on students personal judgment. The answer will vary because there is no specific answer

of this question. The researcher classified this question into specifying at level 3 or analysis level after analyzing this question because one of the criteria of specifying is making judgment. This question also included as higher level question because it is a need to think critically before answering the question.

4. Knowledge Utilization Level

Level 4 or knowledge utilization level is the last level in cognitive level in Marzano and Kendall's taxonomy. It can be seen from **tabel 1** that out of 77 reading questions in this textbook, there is no question found by the researcher that belongs to this level.

Based on explanation above, the English textbook "Work in Progress" in the *Merdeka* curriculum has 77 reading questions in total. The researcher found that the distribution of lower level questions is dominant compare to high level questions in this textbook. There are several explanation for why lower level questions appear more than high level questions. First, learning should begin from basic to more complex. Sweller (1988) in his Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) states that before introducing a more complicated topic, teaching students the required or basic knowledge will help them build frameworks that expand their working memory, which will subsequently enable them to comprehend and learn more complex material. Lower level questions will help students to build knowledge before moving into higher level. Second, it can prevent students from being overwhelmed. If there are too many higher level questions students can be overwhelmed. Cognitive Load Theory by Sweller (1988) mentions that due to its limited capacity, our memory should not be overloaded during studying. As a result, students might lost interest while learning. Moreover, as mentioned above, lower level questions are crucial for evaluating students' prior knowledge and their understanding. They are useful since teacher may use them to asses fundamental knowledge. However, it just a starting point. As a result, students could feel unchallenged or even bored if low level questions are utilized excessively.

CONCLUSION

This research focused on analyzing the level of thinking on reading questions in the English textbook "Work in Progress". The researcher intended to find the distribution of cognitive levels of Marzano and Kendall's taxonomy on reading questions in this textbook. Based on the finding of this research, the distribution of retrieval and comprehension level (lower level questions) is more dominant than analysis and knowledge utilization level (higher level questions). It was found that the distribution of the level of thinking of Marzano and Kendall's taxonomy is still unbalanced.

It is concluded that the number of higher level questions in English textbooks should be added because higher level questions are able to help students to develop their critical thinking ability. Therefore, the researcher suggests that English teachers should not rely too much on the use of one textbook as a supporting media for teaching English. Teachers should provide other resources that have more higher level question. In addition, for author of the textbook, the researcher suggest that the number of higher level questions should be added because questions at this level will

help students to develop their critical thinking skill. Also, for further research, the researcher suggests to investigate or analyze tasks of other skills such as speaking, listening, and writing tasks in this textbook.

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