

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

The learning process in the classroom including English learning cannot be separated from the components that must exist in the learning process, namely learning materials and media. Puspitarini & Hanif (2019: 54) define learning media as a tool in the form of physical and non-physical used by teachers in conveying material to students to be more effective and efficient. Meanwhile, Saputra et al. (2013: 3) convey that learning material is anything that can be used to facilitate learning. One of the most important learning media to be used by students and teachers during the learning process is textbook. Aprilia & Ambarwati (2023: 99) say that textbooks are one of the most important components during the learning process because textbooks serve to support the function of national education.

Textbooks serve as a structured resource, providing students with essential knowledge and practice, while guiding teachers in delivering consistent and comprehensive instruction. Anwari (2021: 1) states that the teacher uses the textbook as standardization in delivering the material to become a resource in teaching. Gunawan et al. (2023: 2) also emphasizes that textbooks provide input into classroom instruction through texts, activities, explanations, and so on. When textbooks are employed in the teaching and learning process, both teachers and students get the benefits. According to Graves in Khusniyah (2020: 389) textbook is a book used as a standard source of information for the formal research of a subject and an instrument for teaching and learning. Textbooks facilitate the teaching and learning process by providing a structured framework, offering essential content, guiding teachers in lesson planning, and enabling students to engage with the material independently.

In the Indonesian education system, the use of textbooks in the learning process is mandatory for teachers and students. This is regulated by the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 2 of 2008, outlined in Chapter 6 on the Use of Textbooks in Educational Units, specifically in Article 6, Paragraph 2, which states that textbooks are used as a

mandatory reference by educators and students in the learning process. From this regulation, it can be concluded that the presence of textbooks in the learning process is essential for both teachers and students.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that a textbook is a structured and standardized resource that facilitates teaching and learning by providing essential content, guidance for teachers, and opportunities for independent student engagement. Textbooks play a crucial role in the learning process, particularly in the context of English education. They serve as structured resources that provide essential knowledge, activities, and explanations, supporting both teachers and students in the teaching and learning process. Textbooks not only guide teachers in delivering consistent and comprehensive lessons but also enable students to engage with the material independently. The mandatory use of textbooks in the Indonesian education system further emphasizes their significance as a vital component for effective and efficient learning.

One important component that must be present in a book is exercises. Supriyadi (2018: 52) explains that exercises are intended as feedback for teachers in order to understand the weaknesses and strengths of the learning process, so that it can be used as a reference in improving the learning process. Exercises in a textbook are a series of activities or tasks designed to help learners master material, develop skills, and deepen understanding through direct practice and application of concepts that have been learned. Barla et al. (2013: 4) convey that exercise is a repetitive activity in the learning process that aims to motivate students to better understand the learning material in order to get better results. Nikmah (2022: 2) also emphasizes that exercise is a set of questions in a book that tests a student's knowledge and skill.

Exercises in textbooks are instrumental in assessing students' comprehension and identifying areas where additional support is needed. Well-designed exercises encourage critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, ensuring that students do not merely memorize information but understand and apply it in meaningful ways. Research conducted by Rofiah & Bahtiar (2022: 2153) show that the use of exercises simultaneously has influence on student learning outcomes. In addition, another research conducted by Parandika et al. (2019: 218) also show that the use

of exercises with completion demands is very suitable for students because it has been proven to be effective in improving students' understanding.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that exercise is defined as a structured tasks or activities designed to reinforce understanding, develop skills, and evaluate students' knowledge to enhance the learning process. Exercises in textbooks play a crucial role in enhancing the learning process by providing feedback for teachers to assess students' strengths and weaknesses. They help students master the material, develop skills, and deepen their understanding through direct application of concepts. Well-designed exercises not only assess comprehension but also promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, ensuring that students engage with the content meaningfully. Furthermore, research has shown that exercises have a positive impact on student learning outcomes, making them an essential component of effective textbooks.

In Indonesian education system, English is one of the general subjects. This is regulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 35 of 2018 contained in Article 5 paragraph 6 which states that English is a general subject which is a curricular program that aims to develop attitudinal competence, knowledge competence, and skill competence of students as a basis and strengthening of abilities in the life of society, nation, and state. This regulation shows that the English subject plays a significant role in the Indonesian education system. By establishing English as a general subject, it highlights that proficiency in English is considered an essential component of student development.

As one of the four English language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) reading is an important component in the English learning process. Jumiatty (2023: 90) states that reading is the meaningful interpretation of printed or written verbal symbols. Safura & Helmanda (2020: 170) also define reading as a cognitive process that involves decoding symbols to arrive at meaning. Reading serves not only as a means to gain information and knowledge but also as a gateway to improving other language skills. Through reading, learners expand their vocabulary, enhance comprehension, and develop critical thinking abilities.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that reading is a cognitive process of interpreting written symbols to derive meaning. Reading is a crucial skill in the English learning process as it facilitates the interpretation and understanding of written texts. It plays a key role in improving language proficiency by enhancing vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking abilities. Understanding and comprehending reading materials are essential, as they enable learners to gain knowledge, apply new information, and foster deeper cognitive engagement with the language.

However, reading proficiency of Indonesia students remains significant challenges. Studies and surveys often highlight the low interest in reading and the limited reading habits among many Indonesia students. Yanti et al. (2020: 309) state that students in Indonesia have a very low reading comprehension skill. Ramdhayani (2023: 68) conveys that Indonesia ranked 60th with a score of 396 out of a total of 65 participating countries in the category of reading category. Jasmine et al. (2024: 81) emphasize that the literacy level of students in Indonesia is still low compared to students in other countries and Indonesia is ranked as the third country with the lowest reading ability. Jatmiko et al. (2021: 142) also say that the results of the UNESCO research stated that the reading interest of the Indonesian people was only 0.001 percent. This figure reflects that in 1000 Indonesians, there is only one person who likes to read. In addition, Dimar et al. (2022: 125) explain that signs that students do not fully understand the content of a reading can be observed when they make numerous errors in answering questions related to the text, are unable to retell the content of the reading, and fail to identify the main topic of the passage.

From the above phenomenon, it can be concluded that students' ability to understand reading is very low. Therefore, teaching students to be able to understand reading texts well is very important to improve their reading skills, one of which can be done by doing exercise questions after reading. In the English textbook for the eighth grade of Junior High School entitled "*English for Nusantara*" used at SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli Barat, there is a reading section in each chapter which aims to get students to read and then answer the exercise questions after reading. Through these exercise questions, it will certainly be able

to test students' understanding of the reading they read. However, although the textbook “*English for Nusantara*” provides a reading section to test students' understanding after reading, it does not make students provoked to be able to think critically about the questions if the questions do not contain Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS).

This is because Higher Order Thinking Skill (HOTS) is a thinking skill that encourages a person to think broadly and deeply about a problem. Although the “*English for Nusantara*” textbook for grade eight Junior High School has a reading section in each chapter that contains reading text followed by questions, it is still uncertain whether the questions actually contain elements of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions are designed to encourage students to think critically, analyze, evaluate, and create new ideas based on the reading they have understood. However, if the questions in the textbook only test basic understanding (such as identifying information or answering questions directly from the text), then the goal of developing higher order thinking skills has not been fully achieved.

This concern is in line with the learning objectives stated in the Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP) and the expected outcomes in the Capaian Pembelajaran (CP) documents for grade eight students. The ATP outlines several reading-related goals that inherently require the use of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). For example, ATP 8.5, 8.6, and 8.7 ask students to write key events from their personal experiences, requiring them to recall, organize, and express ideas creatively, an application of the creating domain in Bloom's Taxonomy. ATP 8.8 and 8.9 expect students to connect and arrange events in an imaginative story, which not only involves sequencing but also demands analytical thinking to establish coherence and logic across the narrative. ATP 8.10 and 8.11 further deepen cognitive engagement by asking students to interpret characters' behaviors and emotions in stories, which aligns with both analyzing and evaluating skills. Similarly, ATP 8.16 and 8.17 challenge students to categorize based on given situations, which is a task rooted in classification and critical comparison, both of which fall under analyzing. These objectives demonstrate that students are expected to engage with texts on a deeper cognitive level.

Furthermore, the CP for Phase D explicitly states that students should be able to read and respond to both familiar and unfamiliar texts independently and critically, and begin to demonstrate inferential skills when interpreting implicit information skills that are central to the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) framework. Therefore, if the reading questions in the textbook focus only on literal comprehension and neglect the analytical, evaluative, and creative dimensions outlined in both the ATP and CP, then the textbook fails to fully support the curriculum's goal of fostering critical and independent thinkers.

Several research have analyzed Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) exercises in textbooks. Atiullah et al. (2019: 435) find that out of 158 reading comprehension questions in textbooks for 10th-grade students in Indonesia, only 24 were at the higher-order thinking level. Similarly, Laila & Fitriyah (2022: 80) examine 142 reading comprehension questions in textbooks for 12th-grade students published by the Ministry of Education and Culture and found that only 25 were classified as higher-order thinking questions. Research by Febrina et al. (2019: 13) on 11th-grade textbooks reveal that 66.8% of the reading comprehension questions were Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), while 33.4% were at the Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) level. Last, Astuti, (2023: 78) find out of 97 reading questions in the textbook 'English in Mind' for the seventh grade, only 21 Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions. These findings are surprising as most analyses indicate that textbooks tend to have more Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) questions than Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), suggesting that many textbooks are still insufficient in providing higher-order thinking question.

Due to the importance of the alignment between textbook and Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions in reading exercise, the researcher wanted to conduct further research to analyze the questions in the reading exercises of the textbook "*English for Nusantara*" for the eighth grade of Junior High School. This is supported by Febrianti et al. (2021: 44) who convey that Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions can be applied at all educational levels, including elementary school, junior high school, and senior high school, to enhance students' critical thinking skills. Moreover, Fitriyani & Ghani (2024: 70) state that Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions in junior high schools aim to enhance

students' understanding of subject matter and encourage them to think more deeply, critically, and creatively. Cahyawati & Sholeh (2020: 101) further add that Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) can be applied to all subjects with the goal of stimulating students' higher-order thinking skills. Finally, Rosidah & Sabtiawan (2024: 2984) emphasize that providing students with questions focused on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) is essential.

The researcher chose this textbook because this textbook allows students to learn four skills in English, namely listening, reading, speaking, and writing. In addition, this book published in 2022 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia refers to the book used for the current curriculum, namely the Merdeka Curriculum. Then, this book is also used by English teachers and students at SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli Barat who have implemented the Merdeka Curriculum. Jannah et al. (2024: 2442) explain that the Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum that emphasizes the importance of developing 21st-century skills, which are closely related to Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS).

The researcher used Bloom's Taxonomy because this framework provides a clear and measurable structure for analyzing the level of thinking in questions, ranging from Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) to Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), making it highly relevant for assessing the quality of questions in textbook. Meanwhile, other theories such as Gardner's Multiple Intelligences focus more on the different types of intelligence of students, rather than the classification of thinking levels in questions. Piaget's Constructivism, while important for understanding how students learn, emphasizes the learning process rather than question analysis. Similarly, Biggs and Collis' SOLO Taxonomy, while offering a cognitive hierarchy, is more geared towards the assessment of overall learning outcomes rather than the specific identification of questions that trigger HOTS. Thus, Bloom's Taxonomy was considered more appropriate and relevant for the needs of this research.

Based on the above problems, the researcher wanted to investigate more about the distribution of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in reading exercises in the “*English for Nusantara*” textbook for the eighth grade of Senior High School.

Therefore, the researcher raised the research title “**An Analysis of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in the Reading Exercises of the Textbook “*English for Nusantara*” for the Eighth Grade of Junior High School Based on Bloom’s Taxonomy.**”

1.2 Focus of the Research

Based on the background of the problem, this research focused on analyzing the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) of the textbook “*English for Nusantara*” in the part of its reading exercises based on Bloom’s Taxonomy.

1.3 Formulation of the Problem

Based on the focus of the research, there were two formulations of the problems:

- 4.2.1 How does the distribution of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in the reading exercises of the textbook “*English for Nusantara*” for the eighth grade of Junior High School?
- 4.2.2 What is the most commonly skill of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) used in the reading exercises of the textbook “*English for Nusantara*” for the eighth grade of Junior High School?

1.4 Objective of the Research

Based on the formulation of the problem, there were two objectives of the research:

- 1. To analyze the distribution of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in the reading exercises of the textbook “*English for Nusantara*” for the eighth grade of junior high school based on Bloom’s Taxonomy.
- 2. To find out the most commonly skill of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) used in the reading exercises of the textbook “*English for Nusantara*” for the eighth grade of junior high school based on Bloom’s Taxonomy.

1.5 Significance of the Research

The significances of this research were as follows.

1.5.1 Theoretically

There were some theoretical significances of this research, namely:

- a. This research was expected to contribute to the body of knowledge on textbook analysis by providing insights into the distribution of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in English reading exercises.
- b. This research offered a clear theoretical framework for evaluating the cognitive level of questions in educational materials. It served as a reference for future studies on the effectiveness of textbooks in fostering critical thinking and higher-order cognitive skills among students.

1.5.2 Practically

The practical significances of this research include benefits for several stakeholders, namely:

- a. For the Researcher

This research served as a valuable learning experience for the researcher in conducting systematic textbook analysis using Bloom's Taxonomy. It enhanced the researcher's understanding of the role of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in educational materials, providing a foundation for future studies and professional development in English Language Teaching (ELT).

- b. For the ELT Teacher

The findings of this research would assist English language teachers in understanding the cognitive levels of questions in the textbook “*English for Nusantara*.” This knowledge can help teachers design complementary instructional strategies and exercises that promote Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), enabling them to provide more engaging and thought-provoking lessons.

- c. For Students

Students could benefit indirectly from this research, as it highlights the importance of developing Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)

through reading exercises. By identifying gaps in the current textbook, this research could prompt improvements in educational materials, fostering students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical abilities.

d. For the Book Writer

The findings of this research would provide constructive feedback for the authors of the textbook "*English for Nusantara*." By identifying the distribution and emphasis on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in reading exercises, the authors could enhance future editions of the textbook to better align with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum and the cognitive needs of students.

e. For the University of Nias

This research could serve as a resource and reference for the University of Nias, especially for students and faculty in the English education program. It contributed to the academic development of the university by showcasing the application of theoretical frameworks like Bloom's Taxonomy in practical research, thus enhancing the university's academic reputation and encouraging similar studies in the future.