

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Education is one of the most influential factors in the national vision. The successful implementation of education is the key to a brighter future that requires the participation of many parties, including teachers. The teacher's work is very influential because teachers are responsible for implementing all educational policies and regulations (Retnawati et al., 2018, p. 215). The success of the educational process in schools must be connected to the role of the teacher. As a result, a teacher must be creative to find valuable ideas or approaches that can be used to educate students. According to Allen, J. M., & Wright, S. E. (2014), the dominant key that a teacher must own is that every innovative process or product that the teacher carries out and produces must refer to students' interests. A teacher must have this key to be successful.

Efforts to improve the quality of education must be balanced with the complex and demanding demands of 21st-century competitiveness. The 21st-century learning system is a shift where the currently designed curriculum requires educational institutions to switch from a teacher-centered learning approach to a student-centered one. It is said that learning equips students with 21st-century abilities, especially 4C, which includes: (1) communication, (2) collaboration, (3) critical thinking and problem-solving, and (4) creativity and innovation. Teachers teaching English are required to utilize HOTS during lessons. Since the 2013 Curriculum, English teachers have been encouraged to apply HOTS, emphasizing activities beyond comprehension by immersing students in the learning process. These exercises should encourage synthesis, analysis, and evaluation.

Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) are essential for individuals to solve new difficulties in the twenty-first century (Brookhart, 2010, p. 8). According to Thomas and Thorne (2009), HOTS is very important for

using, connecting, and modifying previous knowledge to solve current difficulties. In Bloom's revised taxonomy, Anderson & Krathwohl (2001) define HOTS as the gap between the top three ability levels on the cognitive dimension (analyze, evaluate, & create). Therefore, HOTS is evaluated based on activities that include analyzing, evaluating, and generating conceptual and procedural knowledge. Familiarizing students with HOTS activities is very important because it can help students prepare to overcome existing difficulties, adapt to new conditions, and solve specific problems, especially in the rapidly developing 21st century.

The newly revised 2013 curriculum has been in force since July 2017 and is being implemented in stages. Due to the inadequate preparation of teachers and students, not all schools adopted the revised 2013 curriculum. As revised in 2013, the new curriculum is robust and has a positive character for prospective students. This curriculum has been adopted in Kartasura schools, including SMP N 2 Kartasura which incorporated the revised 2013 curriculum.

In educational terms, higher-order thinking skills were a topic of concern many years ago. The use of higher-order thinking is essential for the intellectual development of students. Higher-order thinking allows students to concentrate on the explicit and discover the implicit meaning or content of information. In addition, HOTS includes the investigation of assumptions and beliefs, evaluation of evidence, and evaluation of conclusions (Munawati, A. 2019). As a result, reading, as one of the most challenging skills, is closely related to higher-order thinking, given that texts contain much implicit information. The level of higher-order thinking in reading essay questions can be used to assess reading comprehension. According to Grabe (2009: 5) in Yuliani, I. (2019), reading is a process in which the reader gains knowledge from what he reads and applies it in an academic environment as part of his education. Thus, Airasian & Russell (2008) state in Crose, B. (2011) confirms that essay questions are the only approach to assessing high-level cognitive abilities.

Moreover, they claim that Essay questions are an essential method of evaluating higher-order thinking skills. In addition, Musial (2009) emphasized that Essay questions help evaluate complex learning and higher-order thinking skills. Thus, examining the distribution of higher-order thinking skills in reading practice essay questions is appropriate.

The researcher was interested in conducting research at SMP N 2 Kartasura because in the PLP (Introduction to School Field) II Phase Two activities, the Introduction to School Fields for the Undergraduate Education Program was carried out in semester six or semester seven. At that time, the researcher practiced at SMP N 2, but it was carried out using virtual media meetings because it coincided with the Covid-19 outbreak. Also, SMP N 2 Kartasura is one of the most popular junior high schools in Kartasura, which has included the 2013 New Curriculum and Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in teaching English. The school's address is Jalan A. Yani, No. 320, Banaran, Kec. Pabelan, Kartasura, Kab. Sukoharjo, Central Java, is located close to the Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, only about 1.5 kilometers or 3 minutes by motorbike.

Based on the previous explanation above and regarding encouraging Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), reading and Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) are complementary skills. In reading, students must not only understand the meaning of the written text (Sitorus, M. M. et al., 2021). In addition, he underlined that reading is a complex mental activity that requires students to experience, predict, verify, and recognize information depending on their previous knowledge and experience. Therefore, the researcher wishes to research the strategies teacher used in teaching reading comprehension with the title "Teacher's Strategy for Encouraging the VII Grade Students' Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Teaching Reading Comprehension at SMP N 2 Kartasura".

B. Limitation of the Study

Based on the background of the study, the researcher is limited only to the strategy used by the English teacher of seventh-grade students at SMP N 2 Kartasura in encouraging Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in teaching reading comprehension. The researcher used the *revised Bloom's Taxonomy theory* by Anderson and Krathwol (2001).

C. Problem of the Statement

According to the background above, this study aims to give answers to the following problems:

1. What strategies are used by the teacher to encourage Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in teaching reading comprehension at SMP N 2 Kartasura?
2. How do the students respond to the strategies used by the teacher to encourage Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in teaching reading comprehension at SMP N 2 Kartasura?

D. Objective of the Study

In line with the problem statements above, the specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To categorize the strategies used by the teacher to encourage students in Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in teaching reading comprehension at SMP N 2 Kartasura.
2. To reflect the students' responses to the strategies used by the teacher to encourage Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in teaching reading comprehension at SMP N 2 Kartasura.

E. Significance of the Study

In general, it is expected that the result of the study can give a contribution to the teaching and learning process and that the result can bring some benefits, theoretically and practically, as follows:

1. Theoretical benefits

Theoretically, the result of this study provides a beneficial and referential contribution in giving general knowledge reference for especially junior high school English teachers in determining strategies used to encourage students' Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in teaching English reading comprehension.

2. Practically, this study is expected to give some Practical benefits

- a. For the students,

This study is expected could boost students' motivation and improve their reading skills in learning English by thinking critically and high level.

- b. For the English teachers,

This study is expected could be helpful for teachers as a reference to creating variety, innovative and fun learning activities.

- c. For the other researchers,

This study is expected could be helpful as to provide information and additional reference for further research, particularly regarding strategies to encourage Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in learning reading comprehension.