AN ANALYSIS OF READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS MADE BY ENGLISH TEACHER AT SMAN 2 SIDOARJO BASED ON BARRET'S TAXONOMY

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to examine reading comprehension questions in a final test made by English teacher and to evaluate whether the questions reflect the criteria of Barret's Taxonomy. Content analysis was used in this study by analyzing five units (A, B, C, D, and E) which merely focused on reading comprehension questions. From 137 reading comprehension questions examined, it was found that most of the questions belong to the lower level (literal and inference) as compared to the higher ones (evaluation and appreciation). There were 40 literal questions (29%), 87 were inferential questions (64%), 8 were evaluation (6%) and 2 were appreciation level of questions (1%). It was also found that unit D covered four levels Barret's taxonomy. The other units, that is, unit A, B, C, E merely covered three levels of Barret's taxonomy. The level of the taxonomy, however, was not equally covered in the units, so that the questions in the units were classified as "moderate" reading comprehension questions. Teacher-made reading comprehension questions should be in accordance with the 2013 national curriculum which measure higher order thinking. It is suggested, therefore, that teachers design a final test by including the higher order thinking skills (HOTs) questions apart from the lower-order ones.

Keywords: *reading comprehension questions, Barret's Taxonomy*

INTRODUCTION

In designing questions on the reading passage, teacher should consider the objective of material. It is in line with *Pedoman Mata Pelajaran* (PMP) of English lesson as published by the Ministry of Education (2014) asserting that English teacher must build student's curiosity by using learning material which fosters student thinking skill, and provide and develop questions that measured the higher-order thinking skill. As stated in Education National Standard Organization Regulation No. 0022/P/BSNP/XI/2013, the table of specifications used for English National Exam (ENE) in Education National Standard Organization Regulation No. 0019/P/BSNP/XI/2012 which asserts that the examination only covers few listening materials and several reading materials in a multiple-choice test format. Nowadays, the students' achievement in learning English is still measured by their ability in doing the final examination popularly called *Ujian Nasional* (UN). In respect to the teacher's side, reading is the most tested skill in the final exam (UN). In a similar case, Nur, In Kam and Wong (2003) in their research show that the learning was emphasized on reading ability rather than listening, speaking and writing. The government also claims English as foreign language that has to be taught in Junior and Senior High School since 1967. However, teacher-made reading comprehension questions in a final test did not test the student to have critical thinking. It is in line with Vacca (1981) who stated that typically, questions presented will be literal rather than testing the higher level thinking. Thus, students are more likely to copy answers from the text if it is stated explicitly. A study by Ali, Javed and Shabbir (2017) showed that participants' performance was relatively poor in answering reorganization comprehension questions as compared to answer literal and inferential comprehension questions. Another research was conducted by Chandra (2014) and the result revealed that the English textbook entitled "English" was not a good textbook because the reading comprehension questions did not cover all levels of Barret's taxonomy and the questions which was relatively easy to be answered for senior high school level.

Furthermore, to support this function and to make suitable question, the reading comprehension questions should be categorized based on taxonomy. As Gunning's opinion (2000) argued that taxonomy can help and clarify the levels of questions that will be asked, it is a useful guide for constructing questions on variety of thinking levels and judging questions that have already been created. Ideally, question should be well designed and planned and the answer should be integrated with previously discussed material before moving to a new sequence.

Dealing with taxonomy, there are popular taxonomies used for educational purposes. They are Bloom and Barret's taxonomy. For Bloom's taxonomy, it can be applied not only to English teaching and learning but also to the other subjects such as mathematics, chemistry or others. Then, Barret's taxonomy is intended to be a parameter to construct questions for reading purposes (Reeves, 2012). Therefore, this research is intended to use Barret taxonomy since this taxonomy made by Thomas c barret in 1968 and it is used specially for reading, as cited by Blair, Helman and Rupley who argues that Barret's taxonomy is representative of comprehension the taxonomy that can be used when developing instructional activities, notifying questions and specifying reading comprehension instruction. It consists of four levels of questions. Those questions are designed by asking several types of questions and it is divided based on its difficulties. In respect with this research, the researcher applies four levels of Barret's taxonomy in analyzing reading comprehension questions. They are described as follows:

1. Literal

The first level dealt with information explicitly stated in the text. The common questions used to elicit this type of information are who, what, when, where questions. This level also consists of 6 types of question: recognition for detail, recognition for main idea, recall of sequence, recall of comparison, recall of cause and effect, recall of character traits

2. Inference

It demands students to read beyond the information provided in the text. There are eight types of questions such as inferring supporting detail, inferring main idea, inferring sequence, inferring comparison, inferring cause and effect, inferring character traits, inferring predicting outcome, and inferring figurative language.

3. Evaluation or Critical

It is more difficult than previous level because students are required to make judgment of the content of the passage. This level consists of five question types such as judgment of reality of fantasy, judgment of factor opinion, judgment of adequacy, judgment of appropriateness, and judgment of desirability.

4. Appreciation

It is related to students' awareness of literacy techniques, form, style and structure employed by the author. it consists of four types such as emotional response, identification of characters, reaction, and imagery.

In addition, Barret also asserted that good reading comprehension questions are classified into three categories as follows:

1. Ideal

It means that the reading passage is followed by several reading comprehension questions of higher order thinking skill (HOTS) and lower thinking skill (LOTS) in balance number. Higher order thinking skill here consists of evaluation and appreciation level of Barret. Meanwhile, lower order thinking skill includes literal and inference.

2. Moderate

In this category, comprehension passage is followed by reading comprehension questions of

HOTS (evaluation and appreciation) and LOTS (literal and inferential) but not in balance number. For example, the number of items which require HOTS is higher than LOTS or LOTS is higher than HOTS.

3. Bad

It is considered bad if reading comprehension passage is followed by reading comprehension questions of either higher order thinking skill or lower order thinking skill.

This research is essential to overcome the teachers' problems in designing reading comprehension question in which it must be highly standardized like the national final exam (*UN*) since teaching learning process like student's score will be accumulated before continuing to the next grade. Considering the descriptions above, this research formulated the problem: 1) How do teacher's questions in reading task reflect Barret's taxonomy? 2) What level of barret's taxonomy is mostly used by the teacher in designing reading comprehension question?

METHOD

Content analysis was used in this research to analyze the teacher-made reading comprehension questions for final English test based on Barret's taxonomy. Thus, the researcher merely needed documents as main data. Furthermore, the document was in the form of paper test used by third grade of SMAN 2 Sidoarjo and the documents were collected from the teacher who designed the final English test used by third grade of SMAN 2 Sidoarjo. In terms of designing English test, it is made by altering system. Besides, English paper test for 12th year was chosen because students who were on that grade would be trained with many kinds of exercises apart from national examination. The source of data in this study was teacher–made final English test paper which obtained from the English teacher who designed the final English test used by third gradeof SMAN 2 Sidoarjo. The researcher used the purposive sampling technique to collect the data.

In this research, it was limited to select the items by taking merely the reading comprehension questions test and analyzing 5 units of 25 units and it was 137 reading comprehension questions in total. The 5 units were selected based on certain criteria; (a) it merely took English test from the newest edition around 2018 and 2019, (b) it has the same questions form which is multiple choice, (c) it attaches different reading passage, (d) it presents several of question types, (e) it is taken from final English test to the third grade. By having those criteria, the researcher analyzed the reading question items by using checklist in the column. The taxonomy frameworks were used as guideline to classify question types and in which level of Barret represent in the question items. Thus, collecting the data, reading the data, coding the data, matching the content into column of table note, and interpreting the findings are necessary before drawing the conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted from October until November 2018. There were 5 documents from 25 final English tests being analyzed. The total teacher's questions on reading task of five final English tests were 137. From the five documents, the majority of levels presented by the teachers were inferential level and the second one was literal level. The researcher used checklist based on Barret's taxonomy to interpret and identify 4 level which consisted of literal, inferential, evaluation and appreciation. Further, each level had its characteristic to be determined the types of reading comprehension questions which represented on English test. Then, it discussed on the following section.

Reading comprehension questions reflect on Barret Taxonomy

The researcher provided the result of reading comprehension questions on final English test of Unit A presented on the chart below.
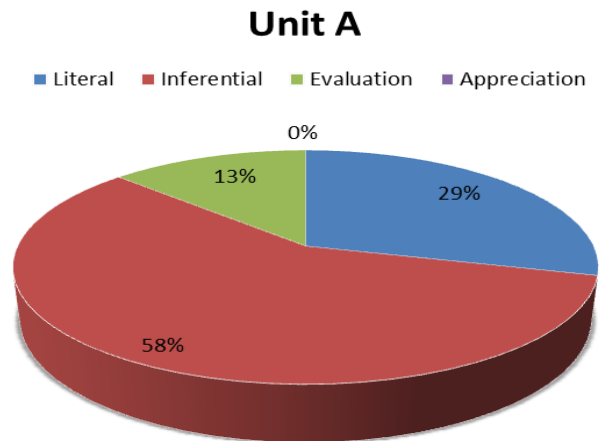
Unit A

■ Literal   ■ Inferential   ■ Evaluation   ■ Appreciation

Chart 4.1 Reading Comprehension Questions on unit A

The chart 4.1 showed that there were 29% reading comprehension questions categorized into literal comprehension, 58% was inferential, 13% was evaluation and 0% was appreciation. Literal level of reading comprehension questions on unit A of final test were 24 in total. Then, the result showed that there were 7 question types that belonged to literal comprehension questions. Literal level attached on number 3, 6, 9, 29, 33, 41, 42. Basically, there were 6 points in which those points as main reasons the questions types could be judged into literal level. They were recognition of details, recognition of main idea, recognition of comparison, recognition of sequence, recognition of cause and effect relationship and recognition of character and traits. However, in this Unit A, there are 2 points as main reasons the questions type could be judged into literal level. They were recognition of details and recognition of sequence. The question is as follows:

To whom is the announcement addressed?
Where does the story take a place?
These are categorized into recognition of detail because the question asks about identifying fact on the reading passage.

Inferential level on unit A found 14 questions and it consisted of number 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 43, and 44. Basically, there were 8 points in which those points as main reasons the questions types could be judged into inferential level. The points were inferring of sequence, inferring comparisons, inferring cause and effect relationship, inferring character traits, predicting outcomes, inferring about figurative language. However, this research was merely found 7 points as main reasons the questions type could be judged into inferential level. They were inferring main idea, inferring figurative language, inferring comparison, inferring supporting detail, predicting outcome, inferring character traits and inferring cause and effect relationship. The following are the samples of questions taken from the data.

We have a small, __pleasant__ office and the work is extremely varied and interesting".
The underlined word is similar to... *(It was judged as inferring level because the*

questions were categorized into inferring comparison. It meant the questions ask about similarity from the selection used by the writer)

a. Huge b. Big c. Tiny d. Little e. Great

What is the text about? *(The question type is categorized into inferring the main ideas because the student is asked to summarize or paraphrased statement from the text)*

In evaluation level, 3 questions were found, which are number 1, 28, and 45. On this unit A was merely found 2 point as main reasons the questions type could be judged into evaluation level. They were judgment of appropriateness and judgment of worth, desirability and acceptability. The example is as follows:

What is the social function of the text?
What is the suitable topic of the passage?

Appreciation level questions were not attached in this unit. Thus, there was no question type belonging to appreciation level.

This current research had similar finding with the previous study which was conducted by Selvin Priscilla Wardana (2014), even though the previous study analyzed on reading examination for university student.The previous researcher asserted that HOTS were lower than LOTS since the lecturer did not design reading comprehension questions in accordance with the objective of reading syllabus used on the university. In contrast with the current research, the researcher assumed that the teacher designed reading comprehension questions by looking at the syllabus first and breaking down the basic competence or *KD*. Besides, the finding indicates that the reading comprehension questions were likely made by English teacher, for unit A were relatively easy to be answered directly on the reading passage. The finding on unit A refuted to the regulation of education ministry no. 69 which asserted that teacher must attach and measure HOTS questions.
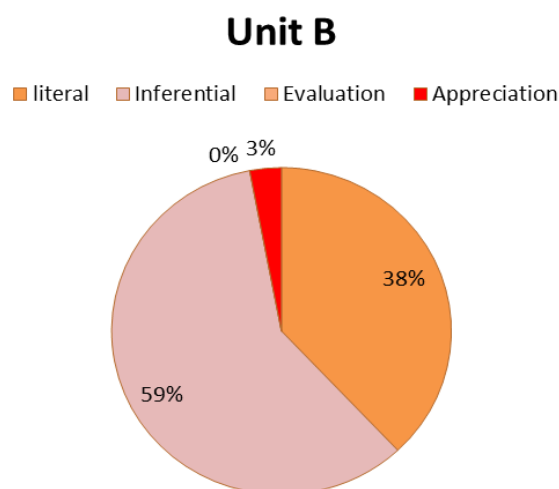
b. Unit B

Unit B

Legend: ■ literal ■ Inferential ■ Evaluation ■ Appreciation

0% 3%

38%

59%

Chart 4.2 Reading Comprehension Questions on unit B

The second finding of unit B also found that reading comprehension questions were dominated by literal and inferential. Meanwhile, the evaluation did not cover on the final test and the appreciation presented on small number and it was classified into "moderate". It is assumed that there was no question developed by teacher that belong to HOTS categories since the text

chosen perhaps difficult for teacher to design evaluation and appreciation questions. The example number 37 is a sample of question reflecting appreciation level:

After reading the review, how would you judge this film? It is...

a. Bad b. Fait c. Not bad d. Mediocre e. Excellent

c. Unit C

Unit C

■ Literal ■ Inferential ■ Evaluation ■ Appreciation
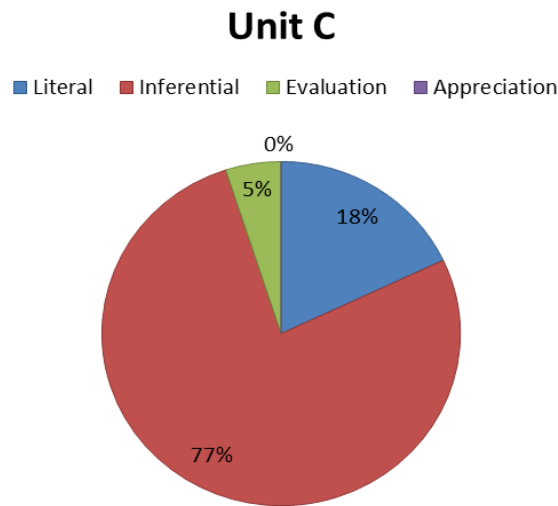
0%
5%
18%
77%

Chart 4.3 Reading Comprehension Questions on unit C

Chart 4.3 showed that there were 18% reading comprehension questions categorized into literal comprehension, 77% was inferential, 5% was evaluation and 0% was appreciation. Unit C had the same finding with unit A in which there was no questions belonging to appreciation level. The dominant level in unit C was inferential level which was also categorized into LOTS in Barret's taxonomy and moderate. However, exercises on unit C already asked student to not only find fact from reading passage but also get deeper understanding about the reading passage. It teaches students to think step by step starting from the lowest, middle and the highest level. It was in line with Searfiss and Readence (1985) who asserted that exercise should be arranged from the easiest to the most difficult.

d. Unit D

The result of reading comprehension questions on final English test of unit D presented on the chart below.

Unit D

■ literal ■ inferetial ■ evaluation ■ appreciation
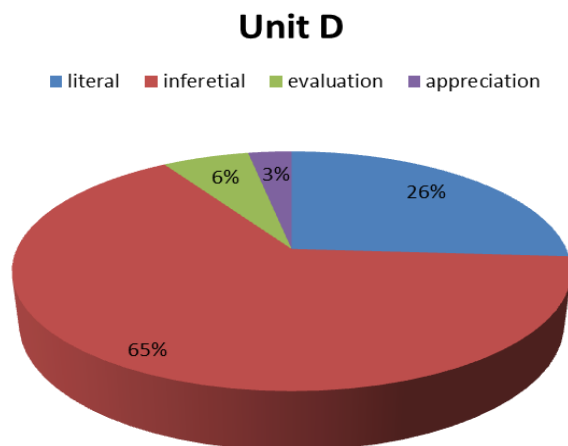
6% 3%
26%
65%

Chart 4.4 Reading Comprehension Questions on unit D

Unit D met the learning objective of K-13 and reflected all level of Barret's taxonomy. There were 26% reading comprehension questions categorized into literal comprehension, 65% was inferential, 6% was evaluation and 3% was appreciation. It showed that the reading comprehension questions reflected 4 level of Barret's taxonomy, although the proportion of evaluation and appreciation were not balanced with literal and inferential. Further, the researcher assumed that unit D reflects 4 level of comprehension of Barret since the teacher wanted to give question types in which students could experience LOTS and HOTS. The finding on unit D was different with the finding of unit A, C, and E in which the appreciation were not presented. Perhaps, it indicated that the students were trained explicit and implicit information to comprehend the passage. The statement was strengthened by the number of evaluation items which were only 2 out of 31 comprehension questions and appreciation which was merely 1 of 31 comprehension questions. The finding on unit D conformed to the regulation of education ministry no. 69 and Indonesian Curriculum no 81a (2013) which asserted that teacher must attach and measure HOTS questions to facilitate HOTS.

e. Unit E

The result of reading comprehension questions on final English test of unit E presented on the chart below.
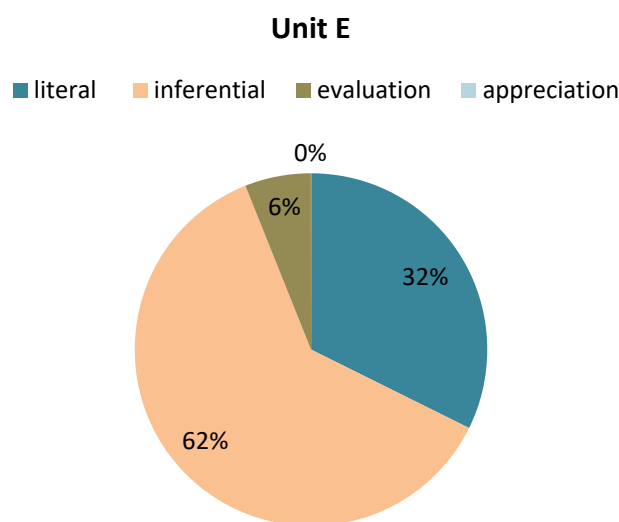
Unit E

Chart 4.5 Reading Comprehension Questions on unit E

The finding of unit E did not reflect 4 level of reading comprehension questions based on Barret's taxonomy. It proved that there were 32% reading comprehension questions categorized into literal comprehension, 62% was inferential, 6% was evaluation and 0% was appreciation. Unit E had same finding with unit A and unit C in which there was no questions belonging to appreciation. This unit merely covered literal, inferential and evaluation, even though, the evaluation merely presented on the small number. The dominant level in unit E was inferential level and the second was literal level which was categorized into LOTS in Barret's taxonomy and it is classified into "moderate". It proved that students were trained to pick up explicit and implicit information to comprehend the passage. The statement was strengthened by the number of evaluation items which were only 2 of 31 comprehension questions and there was no question which was categorized into appreciation level. Besides, the researcher also assumed that the possible cause that make teacher did not design appreciate level is because the lack of teacher's

creativity in developing reading comprehension questions. The other reason perhaps indicated with Day and Park (2005) who argued that if teacher tests students through multiple choices, it only used for measure literal and inferential. Thus, the use of multiple choices in reading comprehension questions did not give a place to measure student's ability in evaluation and appreciation level.

Based on all the findings, it could be concluded that reading comprehension questions on unit A, B, C, D, E did not cover 4 level of Barret taxonomy in balance number, so then, those units classified as "moderate" reading comprehension questions. It was based on Barret who asserted that reading comprehension questions were considered "moderate" if reading comprehension passage was followed by reading comprehension questions of LOTS (literal and inferential) and HOTS (evaluation and appreciation) in not balance number. Due to the finding on each unit, it proved that LOTS was higher than HOTS. Even though those units were classified into "moderate", it did not mean that all of units did not reflect or cover 4 level of Barret taxonomy. Based on the result, there was 1 unit which covered 4 level of Barret taxonomy. The unit reflected 4 level of Barret taxonomy was unit D. The other units merely covered 3 level of Barret taxonomy. In conclusion, it could be stated that unit D became one of reading comprehension question which affirmed the regulation of education ministry no. 69 and 81 dealt with curriculum 2013.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings on the previous chapter, it could be inferred that all units of final test presented with the criteria of levels on Barret's taxonomy. However, each unit had different result, for unit A merely reflected 3 level of Barret taxonomy such as literal, inferential and evaluation. In contrast, unit B merely reflected 3 with barret taxonomy that consisted of literal, inferential and appreciation. Unit C reflected 3 levels of Barret that consisted of literal, inferential and evaluation. On the other hand, unit D could reflect all levels of Barret taxonomy. It consisted of literal, inferential, evaluation and appreciation. Moreover, unit E had same finding like unit A and C which merely reflected 3 levels of Barret taxonomy. In relation to the result, there were literal and inferential levels which are dominantly presented on final English test if it was viewed of Barret's taxonomy. From 137 reading comprehension questions classified from 5 units of final English tests, there were 40 literal question types, 87 were inferential question types, 8 were evaluation and 2 were appreciation level of questions. Thus, the reading comprehension questions made by English teacher on final test could be categorized into moderate reading comprehension questions. It means that the levels of barret taxonomy presented on the final test were not in balance number between HOTS (evaluation and appreciation) and LOTS (literal and appreciation). It also showed that LOTS were main concern on final English test. Further, it was clear that teachers needed improvement in designing a test because those crucial principles necessary for constructing good test items were not met in the final English test. Hence, designing reading comprehension questions which covered all levels of questions based on Barrett's taxonomy was needed to stimulate and help students comprehend the reading passage attached on the final English test.

In relation to the result, it indicates that teacher did not consider the length of passage. If the reading passage was too short, the questions merely covered lower level question type. Thus, for those who are interested in designing reading comprehension questions were suggested to develop the research about teachers' belief toward designing reading comprehension question accordance with the length of reading passage and also link or compare between other theory of

reading comprehension questions with the requirement of education ministry such as Curriculum of 2013.

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