# An Analysis of Reading Questions in an English Textbook for Junior High School Merdeka Curriculum Edition Based on Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

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## Abstract

The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy provides a framework for evaluating cognitive levels in learning materials, and achieving a balanced distribution of lower- and higher-order thinking skills in textbooks is essential to fulfilling the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum. This study aims to analyze the cognitive levels of reading comprehension questions in Interactive English 2 for Junior High School, Merdeka Curriculum edition, based on the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy. Using a qualitative descriptive design with document analysis, 114 reading comprehension questions across 10 chapters were examined and classified into six cognitive domains: Remembering (CI), Understanding (C2), Applying (C3), Analyzing (C4), Evaluating (C5), and Creating (C6). The analysis revealed that lower-order thinking skills dominated, with Remembering (62.28%) and Understanding (18.42%) comprising the majority, while higher-order thinking skills such as Analyzing (7.02%), Evaluating (6.14%), and Creating (3.51%) were underrepresented. These findings indicate that the textbook emphasizes factual recall and basic comprehension over critical, analytical, and creative thinking. which is inconsistent with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum. Therefore, it is recommended that future textbook development ensure a more balanced distribution of cognitive levels to better support students' higher-order thinking skills.

**Keywords:** English Textbook, Reading Questions, Revised Bloom's Taxonomy. Merdeka Curriculum.

## INTRODUCTION

Textbooks play a crucial role in the teaching and learning process, particularly in English language education. Textbooks are teaching materials that assist in the teaching and learning process, according to (Cahyani & Perdana, 2019). They serve as primary learning resources that guide both teachers and students in achieving curriculum objectives. Under the Merdeka Curriculum, English learning is expected not only to improve linguistic competence but also to foster students' critical, analytical, and creative thinking skills. One way to evaluate whether textbooks support these goals is by analyzing the cognitive levels of the questions they provide.

Reading is a fundamental language skill that supports students' academic development and knowledge acquisition. According to (Istiq'faroh et al., 2024) reading is vital to the process of acquiring knowledge. Meanwhile, Reading is the most important of these four skills, as it helps students understand the material and develop their knowledge (Ainayah, 2021). Reading comprehension questions should therefore be designed to stimulate various levels of thinking, ranging from basic recall to higher-order reasoning. According to (Yusnida et al., n.d.). In general, textbooks are useful for learning English and cover the four main skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. English textbooks are useful tools for teachers and students because they provide guidance on what and how to teach in order to improve language proficiency (Heri Gunawan et al., n.d.). Revised Bloom's Taxonomy offers a systematic framework for examining the cognitive demands of such questions.

This introduction further emphasizes the importance of aligning textbook content with national curriculum goals, particularly in fostering higher-order thinking skills among students. Analyzing textbooks through cognitive frameworks allows educators to identify strengths and weaknesses in instructional materials used in classrooms. Then Reading is essential for students' overall growth (Napa-Rodríguez, 2025). Such analysis is essential to ensure that learning resources contribute meaningfully to students' academic and intellectual development.

This study focuses on analyzing reading questions in the textbook *Interactive English 2* to determine the distribution and dominance of cognitive domains based on Revised Bloom's Taxonomy. The research addresses the following questions: (1) What cognitive domains of Revised Bloom's Taxonomy are reflected in the reading questions of *Interactive English 2*? (2) Which cognitive domain is most dominant in the reading questions of the textbook?.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employed a descriptive qualitative design using document analysis. (Meani Yuliana et al., n.d.) Descriptive research is non-hypothesis research. The object of the study was the English textbook *Interactive English 2* for junior high school students, Merdeka Curriculum Edition, published by Yudhistira. The data consisted of 114 reading comprehension questions taken from ten chapters of the textbook. A checklist table based on the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy was used as the research instrument to classify each reading question into one of six cognitive domains: remembering (C1), understanding (C2), applying (C3), analyzing (C4), evaluating (C5), and creating (C6).

The data analysis procedure involved identifying all reading questions, categorizing them according to the taxonomy, calculating the frequency and percentage of each cognitive level, and interpreting the findings descriptively. To ensure validity, triangulation and peer debriefing were applied. The classification results were reviewed and discussed with a co-

researcher who had expertise in English education and Bloom's Taxonomy. A qualitative descriptive approach enables an in-depth examination of educational documents without manipulating variables. Document analysis is appropriate because textbooks are stable sources that reflect curriculum intentions and pedagogical priorities. Systematic classification based on Bloom's Taxonomy enhances the reliability and clarity of the analysis.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

## FINDINGS

The analysis revealed that all six cognitive domains of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy were present in the textbook. However, the distribution was uneven. Out of 114 reading questions, 71 questions (62.28%) were categorized as remembering (C1), and 21 questions (18.42%) as understanding (C2). Applying (C3) appeared in only 3 questions (2.63%). Higher-order thinking skills were limited, with analyzing (C4) found in 8 questions (7.02%), evaluating (C5) in 7 questions (6.14%), and creating (C6) in only 4 questions (3.51%).

*Table Cognitive Dominant*

| Cognitive Domains | Frequences (F) | Percentages (P) |
|---|---|---|
| C1 | 71 | 62.28% |
| C2 | 21 | 18.42% |
| C3 | 3 | 2.63% |
| C4 | 8 | 7.02% |
| C5 | 7 | 6.14% |
| C6 | 4 | 3.51% |
| TOTAL | 114 | 100% |

Based on the table above, the dominant cognitive dimension of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy in the reading questions of the English Textbook for Junior High School Merdeka Curriculum Edition – Interactive English 2 by Yudhistira is remembering (C1). Most of the reading questions in this textbook focus on lower-order thinking skills (LOTS). The percentage was calculated and analyzed using the formula proposed by Arikunto (2010), which is as follows:

$$P = \frac{f}{n} \, x \, 100\%$$

**Note :**
P : Persentage
F : Frequency of answer
N : Number of students

"Remembering" (C1) and "Understanding" (C2) were the most commonly used cognitive levels among the 114 reading comprehension

questions examined across 10 chapters. This prevalence suggests that, rather than testing students' critical thinking, the majority of questions are designed to assess their memory and understanding of texts. Examples include:

- Who gets a headache?
- Does the text provide identification?
- What was Manda excited about?

On the other hand, the analysis showed that higher-order cognitive abilities such as creating (C6), evaluating (C5), and analyzing (C4) were rarely used. There were very few questions that fit within these categories. For example:

- Do you believe that Zigi would do best at the zoo?
- State your reasons.
- What lesson did the characters learn?

Students were rarely asked to create new concepts or make judgments in response to questions. The absence of these more complex questions indicates that students are not being sufficiently encouraged to use textbook-based reading activities to cultivate critical thinking, creativity, or analytical reasoning—all of which are essential skills in the Merdeka Curriculum.

Furthermore, the majority of questions in the textbook were short-response and WH-questions (What, Who, When, Where, Why, How), which further supports their association with lower cognitive skills. There were not many open-ended questions that required lengthy answers or subjective judgments. Overall, the results show that the distribution of cognitive levels is unbalanced, with a significant focus on lower-level abilities. This suggests that future textbooks should include a wider variety of cognitive exercises aligned with the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy to help students develop higher-order thinking abilities necessary for both academic success and real-world problem solving.

The data indicate that "Remembering" (C1), which accounts for a large percentage of the overall questions, is the primary cognitive dimension utilized in the textbook. This directly addresses the first research question regarding the prevailing cognitive level in the textbook. The findings imply that, while the book aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum, it does not adequately balance LOTS (Lower Order Thinking Skills) and HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills), both of which are crucial for fostering students' critical and autonomous thinking in line with 21st-century learning objectives.

Higher-order cognitive levels such as analyzing (C4), evaluating (C5), and creating (C6) are also seldom present, which raises the concern that the textbook does not adequately encourage students to use more sophisticated thought processes. This imbalance may hinder the development of critical abilities such as reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making. The dominance of lower-order thinking questions could promote rote memorization over meaningful learning. Although the textbook complies with the Merdeka Curriculum, it would benefit from a more equitable distribution of cognitive levels to achieve the curriculum's goal of developing autonomous, reflective, and creative learners.

In addressing the second research question, the textbook includes a variety of reading questions, such as multiple-choice, short-answer,

matching, and true/false questions. However, there is a noticeable trend toward questions that have only one correct factual response. Few questions encourage creativity, problem-solving, or personal opinions. Thus, it can be said that the textbook continues to place strong emphasis on basic language comprehension and interpretation while offering limited opportunities for students to acquire higher-order cognitive skills such as creativity and evaluation. This imbalance underscores the need to develop future textbooks that incorporate higher-level thinking skills and a wider range of question types to promote students' overall cognitive development.

These findings indicate that the textbook is heavily dominated by lower-order thinking skills (LOTS), particularly remembering and understanding. Higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), which are essential for critical and creative learning, are underrepresented across the chapters.

## DISCUSSION

The majority of the reading questions in the Interactive English 2 textbook correspond to the lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, specifically Remembering (C1) and Understanding (C2). Questions such as "Who gets a headache?", "Where does the story take place?", and "What does Ria look like?" typically require students to identify, recall, or describe information explicitly stated in the texts. These types of questions are effective for checking comprehension because they require students to demonstrate their understanding of the dialogue, use contextual clues to infer unstated information, and apply what they have learned to select the most appropriate answer from the given options.

However, this trend highlights the textbook's preference for factual recall and superficial understanding over deeper cognitive engagement. While such questions may be useful for beginners, they fall short of meeting the Merdeka Curriculum's requirements for developing critical and creative thinking competencies. Additionally, the cognitive domain consists of two levels: lower (remembering, understanding, and applying) and higher (analyzing, evaluating, and creating). This disparity in cognitive abilities suggests that students are not given enough chances to practice higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). These skills include applying (C3), analyzing (C4), evaluating (C5), and creating (C6).

The scarcity of these advanced categories indicates that the textbook falls short in helping students improve their capacity to critically analyze material, evaluate arguments, apply knowledge in novel circumstances, and come up with innovative ideas. The existing format of the textbook's reading questions may make it more difficult to accomplish the Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on student-centered learning and the development of autonomous, reflective, and creative learners. Students are less likely to go through the deep learning process required to get ready for real-world problems that call for intricate problem-solving and critical analysis if there are not enough HOTS-oriented questions included.

The analysis revealed that Remembering (C1) is the most common category, followed by Understanding (C2), in response to the first research

question, which aimed to determine the major cognitive dimensions in the reading questions. This finding implies that the textbook places a strong emphasis on fundamental interpretation and recall. A well-rounded approach is crucial in order to help students acquire comprehensive language abilities and prepare for complex real-world scenarios in the future (Astari & Sutrisno, 2024).

Although these questions aid in vocabulary development and grammar comprehension, they do not provide learners with challenges related to applying, analyzing, or evaluating the material. This pattern is consistent with findings from the literature review, which indicate that higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) are underrepresented in many Indonesian English textbooks.

Conversely, there are almost no questions under the categories of Evaluating (C5) and Creating (C6), and very few under Applying (C3) and Analyzing (C4). Examples of early attempts to encourage students toward application and basic analysis include queries such as:

"Why didn't Linda allow Erni to use her dictionary?"

"What would you say if you refused Winda and David's invitations?"

Despite aligning with certain curriculum elements, the textbook may not fully achieve the Merdeka Curriculum's objectives because it lacks HOTS-oriented questions and metacognitive engagement. Furthermore, the overall level of cognitive engagement is inconsistent, as these questions appear infrequently and irregularly across chapters. This disparity highlights a significant weakness in the promotion of higher-order cognitive abilities.

The second research question about the kinds of questions utilized is immediately addressed by this observation. The majority of the questions emphasize literal comprehension and fundamental inference. Most of these questions are WH-questions (What, Who, Where, why, How, etc.). The absence of open-ended, evaluative, or creative questions implies that students are not frequently challenged to form views, defend concepts, or contribute original content. These skills are crucial for 21st-century learning objectives. Although these types of questions are necessary for fundamental comprehension, they are not sufficient to encourage higher-order thinking and creativity.

Specifically in the cognitive categories of Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating, this pattern points to a restricted use of higher-order thinking skills as described in the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy. Despite its support for fundamental comprehension and memory, the textbook does not adequately encourage students to evaluate arguments, draw connections between concepts, or come up with original answers. Thus, students could become passive readers and find it difficult to use their reading comprehension abilities in academic or real-world settings. It is imperative that reading materials have a more balanced range of question kinds that encourage deeper cognitive processing in order to develop critical and autonomous thinking.

It is evident that the textbook's question structure does not entirely support the Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on critical thinking and self-directed learning when contrasted with the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy framework. In addition to understanding texts, students are expected to assess information, examine viewpoints, and generate new knowledge.

Since junior high school students are at a developmental time where these skills should be actively fostered, the textbook loses out on possibilities to teach more sophisticated thinking skills by concentrating mostly on LOTS.

Although Yudhistira's Interactive English 2 largely conforms to the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy by using LOTS-based questions, it falls short in integrating HOTS components. That's why the researcher, using Revised Bloom's Taxonomy theory, concentrated on analyzing cognitive levels to fulfill the research objectives. This causes a disconnect between the goals of the national curriculum and the material in the textbook. To better prepare students for problem solving in the real world and critical engagement with texts, future textbook production should aim for a fairer distribution of cognitive levels and incorporate more activities that require analyzing, evaluating, and producing.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that while the reading questions in *Interactive English 2* cover all six cognitive domains of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, they are predominantly concentrated at the lower-order levels. Remembering (C1) is the most dominant cognitive domain, followed by understanding (C2). Higher-order thinking skills, particularly creating (C6), are minimally represented.

The findings suggest that the textbook does not yet optimally support the development of critical and creative thinking skills as intended by the Merdeka Curriculum. It is recommended that textbook authors and publishers design reading questions with a more balanced distribution of cognitive levels to enhance students' higher-order thinking skills. The conclusions reinforce the importance of cognitive balance in reading comprehension questions. Textbook quality plays a crucial role in supporting curriculum implementation. Future revisions should prioritize higher-order thinking skills to improve learning outcomes.

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