

## READING QUESTIONS OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS

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**Abstract:** Reading is emphasized in English instruction at junior high school. A reading part in the textbooks is usually in the form of a text followed by some questions as the common technique to improve reading comprehension. This study formulates three research problems: (1) to what extent the reading questions cover reading comprehension in the textbooks of *Let's Learn English*, (2) to what extent the higher levels of the textbooks correspond with the higher levels of reading comprehension questions, and (3) to what extent the reading questions have followed particular sequence patterns. To answer the questions this study was conducted by describing the data with the design of an evaluative procedure. To analyze the data, the criteria of Barrett's taxonomy and sequence patterns were applied. The results reveal that the reading questions in the textbooks of *Let's Learn English 1, 2* and *3* cover three levels of reading comprehension based on Barrett's taxonomy, namely literal, inferential and evaluative. The literal level is dominated by *Let's Learn English 2*, followed by *Let's Learn English 3* and *Let's Learn English 1*. The inferential level is dominated by *Let's Learn English 1*, followed by *Let's Learn English 3* and *Let's Learn English 2*. *Let's Learn English 1* has more questions in the level of evaluation than *Let's Learn English 3* and *Let's Learn English 2*.

**Key words :** reading questions, Barrett's taxonomy, sequence pattern

The teaching of English aims at the improvement of reading ability that is

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more emphasized than other skills, i.e. listening ability, writing ability, and speaking ability (the decree of Teaching and Education Minister no. 096/1967 in Huda, 1994). In line with the decree, according to 1994 English curriculum at junior high school, the reading skill emphasizes the ability to read English texts in the form of narration, description, and conversation, and special forms such as menu, ticket, and daily notes with a definite length and limited vocabulary. Therefore, the objective of teaching English reading is to enable the students to have the ability to comprehend and interpret the content of many types of written discourse.

A reading part in the textbook is usually in the form of a text that could be a story, a body of information, and an argument. A text is usually followed by some questions which are usually vital parts of reading purposes. Questioning students about what they have read is one of the most commonly used techniques for teaching or improving reading comprehension. Smith and Robinson (1980) state that asking questions serves two important purposes: 1) it is a check to see if students understand what they read, and 2) it attempts to influence the way students think about the materials they have read and will read. Meanwhile, Weaver and Skonkoff (1983) mention that asking questions can enhance understanding. The use of inappropriate questions or the use of questions when they cannot be coped by the students may defeat the purpose for which they are intended to develop comprehension.

One way of looking at questions is to examine the kinds of thinking process involved in asking and answering them. Gunning (1992) points out that taxonomies are appropriate indicators of the relative position that questions occupy on a scale of complexity. Discussions and test questions should be examined to make sure higher levels of thinking are being tapped. Taxonomic descriptions can help clarify the levels of questions being asked. In short, taxonomy is a useful guide for constructing questions on a variety of thinking levels and judging questions that have already been created.

Clark and Starr (1981), Groisser (in Good & Brophy, 1994) and Frazee and Rutnitski (1995) point out that there are five criteria of good questions. Those criteria are: 1) asks something definite in simple, clear, straightforward English that the pupil understand, 2) challenging and thought provoking, 3) is adapted to the age, abilities and interests of the

pupils to whom it is addressed, 4) sequence, and 5) appropriate to its purpose.

Since one of the good question characteristics is sequenced, as teaching devices, ideally, questions should be asked in carefully planned *sequences*, and the answers to each sequence should be integrated with previously discussed material before moving to new sequences. Initial questions might lead students to identify or renew essential facts. Then the students might be asked to refine their understanding and apply them to hypothetical problems (Good & Brophy, 1994). The sequence of question is designed to help students develop connected understanding.

In respect to the types of questions suitable to develop students' thinking process from the simplest to the most complex questions and to comprehend the texts, a variety of taxonomies of reading comprehension are available to help teachers develop a wide range of questions. Some taxonomies are developed by Gray, Herber, Pearson and Jonhson, Raphael, Bloom, and Barrett (Eanes, 1997). This study uses Barrett's taxonomy because of two reasons. First of all, the close relationship between thinking and reading followed by some questions to check whether the text has been comprehended and the definition of reading.

The general problem statement in this study is "How much have the reading questions in the textbooks of *Let's Learn English 1,2* and *3* for junior high school students been constructed to comprehend the texts?". The specific research questions are formulated as follows:

1. How much do the reading questions in the textbooks of *Let's Learn English 1,2* and *3* for junior high school students cover the levels of reading comprehension?
2. How much do the higher levels of the textbooks correspond to the higher levels of reading comprehension questions?
3. How much have the reading questions in the textbooks of *Let's Learn English 1,2* and *3* for junior high school students followed particular sequence patterns?

## METHODOLOGY

The design of this study is descriptive evaluative. The data service of this study is the textbooks of *Let's Learn English 1,2* and *3*. The data of this study are all the questions in each topic of the textbooks. There are

338 reading questions as the data that consists of 96 questions of *Let's Learn English 1*, 127 of *Let's Learn English 2* and 115 of *Let's Learn English 3*. The focused data of this study are the questions that are used to comprehend the texts which are usually placed after the texts.

In order to obtain the data, two instruments were used in this study. The first one was the evaluation sheet of the reading questions using taxonomy of reading comprehension by Barrett's work and the second was the evaluation sheet of sequence patterns of reading questions.

To gather the data of the first and second research problems, Barrett's taxonomy was used. It has four levels of comprehension, namely (1) literal comprehension, (2) inferential comprehension, (3) evaluation, and (4) appreciation. Literal comprehension has six sublevels, those are (1) recognition or recall of details (2) recognition or recall of main ideas, (3) recognition or recall of sequence, (4) recognition or recall of comparisons, (5) recognition or recall of cause and effect relationships, and (6) recognition or recall of character traits. The sublevel of inferential comprehension are (1) inferring supporting details, (2) inferring the main idea (3) inferring sequence, (4) inferring comparisons, (5) inferring cause and effect relationships, (6) inferring character traits, (7) predicting outcomes, and (8) inferring about figurative language. Evaluation sublevels are: (1) judgments of reality or fantasy, (2) judgments of fact or opinion, (3) judgments of adequacy or validity, (4) judgments of appropriateness, and (5) judgments of worth, desirability, or acceptability. As the highest level of comprehension, appreciation has four sublevels, namely: (1) emotional response to plot or theme, (2) identification with characters and incidents, (3) reactions to the author's use of language, and (4) imagery.

Since the sequence of questions from Good and Brophy (1994) is reasonable and unreasonable, the researcher adapted this judgment into some criteria. Seven sequence patterns of reading questions as criteria are used as an instrument to analyze the third research problem. The criteria are: 1) simple to complex, 2) complex to simple, 3) specific to general, 4) general to specific, 5) known to unknown, 6) unknown to known, and 7) information presented in the text.

Simple to complex or complex to simple is stated if a set of questions asks about the text or related to the text from simple to more difficult thing or vice versa. To determine the criteria, Barrett's taxonomy is used.

Specific to general or general to specific is stated if a set of questions ask about general things through specific ones. Known to unknown or unknown to known is stated if a set of questions ask about things related to the text then go beyond the text that has no clue implicitly stated. Information in text is stated if a set of questions does not meet any criteria mentioned previously.

In order to avoid perplexity to categorize a set of questions into the criteria and consideration that a unit of a reading lesson has questions that mostly comprises five questions to comprehend the text, the researcher determined the minimum percentage that is 20 % in a set of questions to meet the criteria. To clarify this statement, see table 1

**Table 1. Evaluation Sheet of Reading Questions Sequence Paterns of *Let's Learn English***

No	Question Codes		Reading Comprehension																Note
			Literal				Inferential				Evaluation				Appreciation				
	Unit	No	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	
1.	I	1																	
2.		2																	
3.		3																	
4.		4																	
5.		5																	

Table 1 shows that among five questions, only one question is in the literal level of recognition or recall of comparisons (L5) and the others are in the literal level of recognition or recall of details (L1). Since the only question at L5 is 20% and the rest is 80%, it can be categorized that the sequence pattern of this set of questions is complex to simple.

The data were gathered from the textbooks of *Let's Learn English 1, 2 and 3* for junior high school students with the following documents as references; i.e., Basic Course Outline, Basic Course Outline Supplement and Teacher Guide Book 1, 2, and 3. The procedures of data collection were as follows. The first procedure was identifying the data by using references (Meleong, 1988). It was an orientation step to have general picture of the data aiming at getting information of the data. Secondly, selecting the reading questions used to comprehend the texts was conducted. This step was followed with recording. According to Krippendorff (1980), it is required whenever the phenomena of interests are either unstructured relative to the methods that are available or symbolic in the sense that they carry information about phenomena. In this phase, coding was included.

The data of comprehension level required by questions was analyzed based on the taxonomy of Barrett. There were four steps that were conducted in order to analyze the data. First, after the data had been collected with their codes, they were inserted into the taxonomy table. At the same time, each question was categorized based on the level of comprehension of Barrett's taxonomy. As the third phase of analysis, in order to answer the first and second research problems, the frequency of the questions in each level were calculated in the form of percentage.

Meanwhile, the third research problem deals with the sequence patterns. The questions frequency in a set of questions was calculated in the form of percentage, therefore, the criteria could be found. As a result of this calculation, the value is different from one to another. This value is called "metrics" (Krippendorff, 1980). The metrics in this study is adapted from the work of Skierso (1991) about the textbook selection and evaluation. He developed a list of criteria based on various checklist that was compiled by adapting and adopting the evaluative criteria suggested by many foreign language and second language educators. One of the evaluative criteria in the guideline is organized as exercises and activities. Since the exercise is reading questions to promote critical thinking, the metrics is employed. It is presented as follows:

Excellent	:80–100%
Good	:60–79%
Adequate	:40–59%
Weak	:20–39%
Totally Lacking	: 0–19 %

Having this metrics, the final result of the sequence was judged. Each textbook had the same treatment in analyzing the data. Finally, by having the result of percentage of questions in each level of reading comprehension and the sequence patterns of questions in each textbook, the problems of this study could be answered. As the last step, final conclusion was drawn.

In order to have the reliability in the result of the evaluation, three evaluators were employed to evaluate the reading questions of the textbooks. The researcher selected her colleagues that she considered having a

qualification in terms of their education and experience in English. The researcher herself was the first evaluator and was assisted by her colleagues as a second and third evaluator. The second evaluator is an English lecturer and is the student of graduate program of State University of Malang and the third evaluator is an English teacher of junior high school and he is the student of graduate program of State University of Malang. The first evaluator explained the procedure to the second and third evaluators that the evaluation was in terms of categorizing the reading questions into the level of reading comprehension based on Barrett's taxonomy and the sequence patterns of the questions. The evaluators were given the data about three weeks to evaluate them. Since there were some differences of coding among three evaluators, the results were calculated then divided into three to obtain last decision of questions coding.

The reading questions in the textbooks of *Let's Learn English 1*, *2*, and *3* do not present all levels of reading comprehension based on Barrett's taxonomy. The levels are literal, inferential, and evaluation; therefore appreciation level is excluded. As an addition, there are some unidentified questions found in this study. Thus, all levels of reading comprehension based on Barrett's taxonomy have not been covered by the questions of the textbooks. Taking account this finding into consideration, the expected result is that the questions in the textbooks of *Let's Learn English* have covered all levels of reading comprehension based on Barrett's work; at least the questions in *Let's Learn English 3* as the higher textbook for students of higher level.

The questions in *Let's Learn English 1* in the literal level with 73.6% is the highest portion which is followed with 23.61% of questions in the inferential and 1.04% in the evaluation level. Since the questions in the low level of reading comprehension of the textbook for students of low level, the distribution is still good. It means that the textbook for students of low level have been given low level of reading comprehension questions.

Meanwhile, a good distribution of the questions in the textbook of *Let's Learn English 1* is not revealed in *Let's Learn English 2*. The questions in the literal level with 87.4% has the most portion, while the questions in the inferential and evaluation level with 12.33% and 0.26% is the second and the third one. Since this textbook is for the middle level of the

students, hence, the expected questions distribution is balance meaning that the questions in the low level is about the same as the questions in the higher level. Therefore, the expected distribution is 50% of the questions are in the literal level and the rest are in the inferential and evaluation level.

78.55% of questions are in the literal, 20.87% are in the inferential and 0.58% are in the evaluation level in *Let's Learn English 3*. As the higher textbook for students of higher level, this book is expected to give higher level of reading comprehension questions. Hence, the ideal distribution of the questions is 0.58% of questions in the literal, 20.87% in the inferential and 78.55% in the evaluation level.

#### **The Covered Levels of Reading Comprehension of the Textbook of *Let's Learn English 1***

The covered levels of reading comprehension of the textbook of *Let's Learn English 1* are only three, namely literal, inferential and evaluation level with an unidentified level as an addition. This finding means that appreciation level is excluded. Literal comprehension with 73.6% has the highest portion that is followed with inferential with 23.61% and evaluation (1.04%) as the lowest portion respectively.

In the literal level that comprises six categories, the questions ask all categories. The questions that ask recognition or recall of details (L.1) (58,34%) dominate the portion of the literal level. It is followed with the questions that ask recognition or recall of main ideas (L.2) (5.90%), ask recognition or recall of cause and effect relationships (L.5) (4.86%), ask recognition or recall of sequence (L.3) and of character traits (L.6) with the same portion that is 1.73%, and ask recognition or recall of comparisons (L.4) (1.04%) respectively. With respect to this finding, the expected distribution of the questions in L.1 is 58.34%, L.2 is 5.90%, L.3 is 4.86%, L.4 and L.5 are 1.73, and L.6 is 1.04%.

Only seven categories were fulfilled by the questions among eight ones, therefore, inferring about figurative language was excluded. Inferential level is dominated with the questions that ask to infer supporting details (I.1) (19.79%). It is followed with the questions that ask to infer the main idea (I.2) and infer cause and effect relationships (I.5) (1.04 %), to infer sequence (I.3) (0.69%), to infer comparison (I.4), to infer character



traits (I.6) and to predict outcomes (I.7) with the same portion that is 0.35% respectively. Taking account the inferential as the higher level of comprehension and the textbook of *Let's Learn English 1* for students of low level into consideration, the questions in the inferential level could be getting fewer.

Evaluation level that consists of five categories has 1.04 % as the lowest portion of the levels. Among those five categories, only two of them are covered by the questions. The questions that ask students to make judgments of reality or fantasy meaning that the student is requested to determine whether incidents, events, or characters in a selection could have existed or occurred in real life on the basis of his experience (E.1) has 0.35%. Meanwhile, the questions that ask students to make judgments of fact or opinion meaning that the student is asked to decide whether the author is presenting information which can be supported with objective data or whether the author is attempting to sway the reader's thinking through the use of subjective content that has overtones of propaganda (E.2) has 0.69%. Since there are more questions in E.2 than E.1, a good distribution is reversed; E.1 has 0.69% and E.2 has 0.35% of evaluation questions.

The unidentified questions were the questions that had nothing to do with the text. It was found 0.58% of them. It seems that they were out of the text. In other words, they did not fit with the criteria of the taxonomy.

#### **The Covered Levels of Reading Comprehension of the Textbook of *Let's Learn English 2***

Meanwhile, the covered levels of reading comprehension of the textbook of *Let's Learn English 2* are three, namely literal, inferential and evaluation. Literal (87.4%) is the highest portion that is followed with inferential (12.33%) and evaluation (0.26%) as the lowest portion respectively.

All six categories in literal level are presented by the questions. The questions that ask recognition or recall of details (L.1) (46.98%) are the highest portion in the literal level. It is followed with the questions that ask recognition or recall of main ideas (L.2) (18.64%), ask recognition or recall of cause and effect relationships (L.5) (11.02%), ask recognition or recall of sequence (L.3) (5.25%), ask to recognition or recall of character

traits (L.6) (4.46%), ask to recognition or recall of comparisons (L.4) (1.05%) respectively. Since this result found in the textbook of *Let's Learn English 2*, a good distribution of questions in the literal level is L1 with 1.05%, L.2 with 4.46%, L.3 with 5.25%, L.4 with 11.02%, L.5 with 18.64% and L.6 with 46.98%.

Inferential level that comprises eight categories is presented by the questions only in four categories. It is dominated with the questions that ask to infer supporting details (I.1) with 10.24%. It is followed with the questions that ask to infer the main idea (I.2) with 1.57%, ask to infer comparisons (L.4) and to infer cause and effect relationships (I.5) has the same percentage that is 0.26%. With respect to this finding, the questions are supposed to be fewer in the level of I.1. Thus, the distribution is 0.26% of questions in the level of I.1 and I.2, 1.57% in the I.4 level and 10.24% in the I.5.

As the lowest portion of the levels, there is only one category among five in evaluation level. The questions ask students to make judgments of fact or opinion meaning that the student is asked to decide whether the author is presenting information which can be supported with objective data or whether the author is attempting to sway the reader's thinking through the use of subjective content that has overtones of propaganda has 0.26%.

#### **The Covered Levels of Reading Comprehension of the Textbook of *Let's Learn English 3***

The textbook of *Let's Learn English 3* covers three levels of reading comprehension, namely literal, inferential and evaluation level. It means that appreciation level is excluded. Literal with 78.55% has the highest portion followed with inferential with 20.87% and evaluation with 0.58% as the lowest portion respectively.

The questions present literal level that comprises six categories. The questions that ask recognition or recall of details (L.1) (43.19%) dominate the portion in the literal level. It is followed with the questions that ask recognition or recall of main ideas (L.2) (13.04%), ask recognition or recall of cause and effect relationships (L.5) (12.17%), ask recognition or recall of sequence (L.3) (5.22%), ask recognition or recall of comparisons (L.4) (2.61%) and ask recognition or recall of character traits (L.6) (2.32%). Taking account the literal as the low level of comprehension and

the textbook of *Let's Learn English 3* for students of higher level into consideration, the questions in the literal level should be getting fewer. Thus, the questions in the literal level are expected to be 2.32% in L.1, 2.61% in L.2, 5.33% in L.3, 12.17% in L.4, 13.04% in L.5, and 43.19% in L.6 respectively.

Inferential level that comprises eight categories is presented only by four ones. It is dominated with the questions that ask to infer supporting details (I.1) (14.78%). It is followed with the questions that ask to infer the main idea (I.2) (4.06%), ask to predict outcomes (I.7) (1.74%), and the questions that ask to infer cause and effect relationship (I.5) (0.29%). From this finding, a good distribution of questions in the inferential level of the textbook of *Let's learn English 3* is 0.29% of questions in I.1, 1.74% in I.2, 4.06% in I.5, and 14.78% in I.7.

Evaluation level that consists of five categories has 0.58% as the lowest portion of the levels. Among those five categories, only one category is covered by the questions. The category is the questions that ask student to make judgments of fact or opinion meaning that the student is asked to decide whether the author is presenting information which can be supported with objective data or whether the author is attempting to sway the reader's thinking through the use of subjective content that has overtones of propaganda (E.2).

#### THE READING QUESTIONS BASED ON BARRETT'S TAXONOMY

This part deals with the second question of research problem; that is whether the higher levels of the textbooks correspond with the higher levels of reading comprehension questions. The finding reveals that reading questions in the textbooks of *Let's Learn English 2* and *3* do not correspond with the higher levels of reading comprehension questions as well as the questions that are placed in literal, inferential, and evaluation levels of the taxonomy based on Barrett's work. Questions in the literal level dominate the portion over all levels with 79.85%. Inferential (18.94%) is the second highest portion. Meanwhile, there are only 0.63% of questions in evaluation level. The other finding that cannot be neglected is the questions that did not meet any criteria of Barrett's taxonomy (0.69%). With respect to this finding, the necessity of literal questions, and the importance of higher levels of comprehension in reading, the numbers in both,

ideally are in balance. Therefore, an ideal distribution of the questions is 50% of questions in the literal and the rest are in the inferential and evaluation level.

#### **The Sequence Patterns of Reading Questions**

The sequence patterns of reading questions in the textbooks of *Let's Learn English 1, 2, and 3*, generally, is good. It is indicated 68.86 % of the questions lead students to have patterns, namely simple to complex, complex to simple, specific to general, general to specific, known to unknown and unknown to known. This finding is in line with the statement by Frazee and Rudnitski (1995) that the order of questions should lead students somewhere. The ideas are built upon each other from a simple to the complex and follow a logical direction that relates to a purpose.

#### **The Sequence Patterns of Reading Questions in the Textbook of *Let's Learn English 1***

The sequence pattern of reading questions in the textbook of *Let's Learn English 1* cover six patterns that are simple to complex, complex to simple, specific to general, general to specific, known to unknown, and information presented in text. As a result, unknown to known is excluded. The sequence is dominated with the pattern of information presented in text (44.44%) that is followed with simple to complex (27.78%). Specific to general has 16.66% and general to specific has 5.56%. Meanwhile, the complex to simple and known to unknown have the same portion (2.78%).

Around 55.55% of questions have pattern meaning that the questions sequences in the textbook of *Let's Learn English 1* lead students to the sequence. The judgment of this value is adequate. With respect to this finding, some revision of the sets of questions to have the sequence patterns, perhaps, should be constructed.

#### **The Sequence Patterns of Reading Questions in the Textbook of *Let's Learn English 2***

There are only five sequence patterns of reading questions in the

textbook of *Let's Learn English 2*. Those patterns are simple to complex, complex to simple, specific to general, general to specific, and information presented in text. Therefore, known to unknown and unknown to known are not included. The sequence is dominated with the pattern of general to specific (45.61%). The information presented in text (19.30%) is the second highest portion of the sequence. It is followed with simple to complex (17.54%). Accidentally, the complex to simple and specific to general have the same portion (8.77%).

In general, the judgment of the sequence pattern of the textbook is excellent. It is evidenced by the questions that have patterns around 80.69%.

#### **The Sequence Patterns of Reading Questions in the Textbook of *Let's Learn English 3***

The sequence pattern of reading questions in the textbook of *Let's Learn English 3* is the same as in the textbook of *Let's Learn English 1*. It covers six patterns that are simple to complex, complex to simple, specific to general, general to specific, known to unknown, and information presented in the text without unknown to known. The sequence pattern of information presented in the text (35.3%) dominates the patterns. It is followed with the simple to complex (31.37%). Specific to general has 11.76% and general to specific has 13.73%. Meanwhile, the complex to simple has 5.88% and known to unknown has 1.96%.

There are around 64.68% of questions with pattern meaning that the questions sequences in the textbook of *Let's Learn English 3* are good.

### **DISCUSSIONS**

#### **Discussion of the Covered Comprehension Levels of the Reading Questions**

The classification of questions in the textbooks of *Let's learn English* revealed in three levels of reading comprehension based on Barrett's taxonomy; those are literal, inferential and evaluation. Turner (1988) points out that when a reader has no clearly defined specific purpose but is simply reading, he may be said to comprehend at one or more levels. The term "levels" does not mean simply different degrees of difficulty. It refers rather to the attitude and reaction to what is read.

In addition, he says that the ways of classifying questions or to be familiar with different typographies of questions is one way to become better questioners and to become aware of their use of questions. Looking at questions in various ways may also be useful in helping both teachers and students to become more aware of the importance of purposeful, effective questions. Such awareness can lead greater proficiency in the skills involved in both asking and answering questions.

Taking account the findings into consideration, he mentions that if the reader is getting only literal meaning, he is reading receptively and somewhat passively. He is trying to receive only what the author has to say. The finding shows that the questions in the literal level is 79.85% meaning that there are 79.85% of questions require students to recognize or recall of ideas, information and events that are explicitly stated in the text. It does not take much thinking. Therefore, they are not active.

Moreover, inferential (18.82%) and evaluation (0.63%) levels as the higher levels of reading comprehension require students to devote more thinking in order to get the message from the text, therefore, he should be active. This finding is supported by Turner's statement (1988) that higher level of comprehension involves beyond or between the lines. The reader brings knowledge and experience to the act of reading, draws inferences, and applies reading life to situations. He is reading actively. For literal comprehension, the reader needs to understand exactly what is stated to receive the author's literal message. For higher levels of comprehension, the reader is involved in the interchange of ideas with the author.

Since questioning of assignments play a large part in determining what thought processes children will apply to reading, it is necessary not to spend the opportunities. Turner (1988) explains that classifications by Barrett, Pearson and Johnson and others are useful as a means for analyzing and classifying questions and tasks require. Although such classifications are not empirically based, they do offer a logical description and organization of various thinking operations.

In line with the above statement, Harris and Smith (1985) point out that the four-step scheme (identification, analysis, evaluation and application) can be used to categorize questions. Emphasizing the application of thinking to reading depends on the age level of students, students' need, type of material being read, and the objectives of the instructional pro-

gram the instructional activities.

By having taxonomy, Calfee and Curley (in Flood, 1984) state that it had a major impact on the development of reading curricula, especially the questions and workbook exercises that direct much of the students' learning today. Although Barrett mentioned elements like comparison, cause-effect, sequence, and the like, he did not emphasize the character of the passages being read. If a "sequence" element can be found anywhere in a passage, that suffices as a basis for teaching and testing sequence objective.

Taking account the previous statement and the findings into consideration, the arrangement of teaching reading purposes are able to be based on the categories of Barrett's taxonomy. However, the questions of the texts are expected to contain the categories, especially, the levels of reading comprehension in order to have a logical description and to offer organization of various thinking operations.

#### **Discussion of the Reading Questions Based on Barrett's Taxonomy**

The finding of literal questions as the highest portion of reading comprehension level based on Barrett's taxonomy with 79.85% of all questions in the textbooks of *Let's Learn English* reveals that the questions do not require much thinking. The students are passive. Since the questions are literal level, the answers will be as what they ask.

With respect to the finding, Hilda Taba's research (Vacca, 1991) as well as the research of others, it is almost axiomatic to assert, *what we ask is what we get*. That is, if readers are asked predominantly inferential and evaluative questions, they are more likely to make inferential and evaluative responses. Question-asking, on the other hand, which seeks recall and recognition from children will result in exactly that way. Further, Aulls (in Vacca, 1991) noted that this is why that "low level questions may be doing very little to enhance student's reading comprehension growth".

In line with Taba's, Guszak (in Harris & Smith, 1986) has research on teacher's questions that the questions require children to recognize and recall details constitute 78.3 per cent of those asked in second grade even in grade six, the teachers in Guszak's preliminary study asked questions calling for the lowest level of thought. More recent studies by Durkin and Duffy and McIntyre support and extend the findings of Guszak with re-

spect to the nature of classrooms interactions. Durkin study indicated that focus on factual recall. Duffy and McIntyre found that teachers seem to be more concerned with keeping a flow of activities going than in causing reflection and thought on a part or learners. Turner (1988) states that it should be taken care of the questions not to move quickly beyond literal post reading questions. These questions deal with the easiest level of meaning to understand, requiring less abstract and complex thinking than do questions focused on what the reader can infer from a particular reading passage. Critical reading questions demand a still higher level of thinking. The transition from questions that explore the literal meaning of passage to those inferential and critical thinking should be a gradual planned sequence. The research indicates that lower-level questions can produce higher-level thinking. Perhaps, this is because such questions deal with awareness of textual cohesion and help the reader build story maps.

The cause of literal level seems mostly used, perhaps, when people read something, the questions usually asked are in the level of literal. Moreover, it is rare to ask someone with higher level of questions, particularly, the inferential, evaluation or appreciation level in daily life. Frazee and Rudnitski (1995) found out that, in class, teachers typically ask only convergent questions. Adams (1985) states that literal comprehension is probably the most used because everyday reading skills, such as skimming and scanning telephone directions, catalogues, movie and television listings, and even reading the newspaper or a favorite magazine, seldom require anything but literal comprehension. In addition, most training in reading courses from the early grades through college classes places a larger emphasis on literal recall than on critical or affective comprehension. An examination of materials and tests used in reading courses, as well as in other subjects, reveal a strong reliance on literal comprehension with more stress on recall than on forming judgments, evaluations, or personal reactions at the critical level. But in spite of daily use, most people do not read as well as they could at the literal level.

In addition to the commonly use of literal level, Frazee and Rudnitski (1995) point out that most objective test items also emphasize the convergent level of fact and recall. Often, standardized test items drive the curriculum and level of instruction in many schools. Content questions are important to understanding and achievement, however, questions should



also seek to go beyond the level of recall.

Even though the questions ask in the literal meaning seems mostly at any reading in daily life, they are important to develop higher level of thinking. Some research reported by Gatheral (in Turner, 1988) indicates that effective questions involving lower-level thinking are most crucial to developing thinking, even for higher-level thinking.

One level does not have to end for another to begin since there is interdependence of all the thought processes involved in reading comprehension. Turner (1988) points out that higher-level comprehension tasks are memory dependent and dependent on literal comprehension. Literal comprehension is, then, necessary but not sufficient for such comprehension to occur. Inference, critical, and creative reading involve greater amounts of information and often deal with complexities of relationships. Therefore, greater difficulty is often involved in the thinking process.

Pertaining to the above statement, Frazee and Rudnitski (1995) cite that questions must be adjusted to suit the need of the students. Gall (in Frazee & Rudnitski, 1995) found that different levels of questions are effective, depending upon the learner and the content of the lesson. Certain lessons require more recall, whereas other lessons require more thought. The key to effective questioning, according to this research, is to be certain that a knowledge base is established before moving into the levels of higher-oriented thinking skills. But, Ryan (in Turner, 1988) concluded from his research that higher-level questions are more efficient than lower-level questions in moving students toward both higher- and lower-level understanding.

Since one of the questioning goals is to encourage students to think critically and answer questions beyond the level of recalling facts, Turner (1988) suggests that the reading class should pay attention to all four-thought processes; those are identification, analysis, evaluation and application regardless of grade level, but some developmental sequence should be planned. Logically, the fundamental processes with young children are more emphasized but not ignore higher-order processes. Even beginning readers are ready and able to make inferences within the realm of their experiences and cognitive levels. Older children should concentrate more on higher-order thought processes but not to the exclusion of identification. Depending on the topic and the child, individual differences suggest that

certain thought processes may be more appropriate than other at any point in time. Normally, the increasing complexity of the reading material children can handle as they become more fluent readers provides a natural developmental sequence for applying thinking processes in reading. A child is likely to reach higher levels of comprehension with easier materials. Therefore, if a child does not respond adequately to a reading actively, the teacher, has at least two alternatives: 1) move to activities at an easier (more literal) level of understanding, or (2) abandon that reading activity is to raise the level of comprehension or to deal with more difficult materials.

Frazee and Rudnitski (1995) state that good questioning involves a thoughtful balance between fact-recall questions that guide comprehension and higher-order questions that challenge students to think critically while searching for several solutions.

In short, questions with literal comprehension are still important to develop more higher thinking questions, however, the questions should be planned gradually in order to have reading between or beyond the line as higher levels of comprehension. Since the literal questions are necessary and higher levels of comprehension are important in reading, the numbers of questions in both, ideally, are in balance.

#### **Discussion of Sequence Patterns of Reading Questions**

The sequence patterns of reading question help students lead to the particular destination. By knowing the sequence of a set of questions, it is expected that they offer logical thinking. With respect to Barrett's taxonomy, Turner (1988) cites that the abilities to recognize inductive sequences of ideas leading to a conclusion; to apply deductively a principle to new situations; and to recognize cause –effect, comparison, contrast, and other idea relationships relate to the level of the intellectual powers of the learner.

In teaching and learning activities in the class, a teacher can use initial questions that lead students to identify or review essential facts. Then the students might be asked to refine their understandings and apply then to real of hypothetical problems. Alternatively, the teacher might initiate a problem solving or decision making discussion by first posing a question or issue to be addressed, then eliciting suggested resolutions, and then en-

gaging students in critical thinking about the trade-offs that each of the suggested resolutions offers.

Since the idea relationships have to do with the intellectual of the students and concerning the sequence patterns of reading questions based on Barrett's taxonomy, the transition of simple to complex questions or complex to simple questions should be gradually planned sequence.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusions

Based on the findings and discussions of the results that consist of three parts, i.e. the covered levels of the reading questions of *Let's Learn English 1,2* and *3*, the relation between the students of higher levels and those of the reading questions of *Let's Learn English 1,2* and *3*, and the reading questions that have followed certain sequence patterns, the detailed conclusions are as follows: (1) the levels of reading questions in the textbooks of *Let's Learn English 1,2* and *3* covered only three levels of reading comprehension based on Barrett's taxonomy. Those levels are literal, inferential, and evaluation. Therefore, the appreciation level is excluded; (2) the higher levels of the textbooks do not correspond with to the higher levels of reading comprehension questions based on Barrett's taxonomy. The questions in the literal level as the lowest level of reading comprehension are dominated with Book 2, then Book 3 and Book 1. As the higher level, inferential is dominated with Book 1, Book 3 and Book 2 respectively. Meanwhile, Book 1 has more questions in the evaluation level than Book 3 and Book 2; (3) the reading questions in the textbooks of *Let's Learn English* are good in terms of particular sequence patterns.

### Suggestions

This part is devoted to suggestions based on the findings, conclusions and discussions about the findings. The suggestions are meant to improve current practices of reading questions; therefore the suggestions are addressed to (1) English teachers of junior high school, (2) the textbooks writers, and (3) researchers who are interested in the evaluation of reading questions.

### **Suggestion for Teachers**

Since this study finds that the reading questions in the textbooks of *Let's Learn English 1, 2 and 3* cover only three levels of reading comprehension based on Barrett's taxonomy, therefore, the teachers may ask or create the questions including appreciation level to improve the comprehension.

This study finds that the textbooks for students of higher level have not given the higher level of reading comprehension questions. Based on relevant theories and empirical study of the need of higher level questions to improve comprehension, the teachers are expected to use more higher level of questions that have not been written in the textbooks i.e. *Let's Learn English 2 and 3*. Before the lesson, teachers should take time to write out reading questions, to plan and sequence questions that are appropriate to a specific higher-order thinking category. Then, write questions for inferential, evaluation and appreciation. Putting these on note cards to help teachers recall key questions as teachers are proceeding through the lesson. Moreover, they may use low level questions to lead students to higher level of reading comprehension questions orally, which can be done by using prompting, redirecting, and probing questions to extend, clarify, or amplify the students' answers.

The findings show that the reading questions which have sequence patterns were around two third of the all questions. Therefore, it is suggested that the teachers consider the sequence of a set of questions by paying attention to the answer of each question in a sequence that should be integrated with the previously discussed material before moving to new sequences in order to help students develop connected understanding.

### **Suggestions for Textbook Writers**

The textbooks writers may use these findings to revise the reading questions to improve their quality in order for the students or teachers to better comprehend the texts. Moreover, they may take these findings into consideration for further revision of the sequence patterns of the sets of reading questions in order to give logical directions related to the purpose, and to assist students to lead to meaningful exchange of information and insights.

### Suggestions for Further Research

This study was conducted with descriptive evaluative design and focusing on the reading questions in the textbooks. Therefore it is suggested that other researchers conduct further studies with different focuses and designs.

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