READING QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS FOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS GRADE X

Anggi Anggraeni; Suharyadi
Email:anggi.space@gmail.com; suharyadi_79@yahoo.com
State University of Malang

ABSTRACT: This study was aimed at describing the nature of reading questions based on Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy. This study used descriptive-quantitative design. Two instruments were used, namely interview guide and identification sheets. The data were collected by selecting all the post reading questions and sorting the questions into each monologue text. Then, they were analyzed based on the knowledge dimension and the cognitive process dimension of Revised Bloom’s taxonomy, and the question forms. The results revealed that there were six question forms in Textbook 1, and twelve question forms in Textbook 2; Textbook 1 presented six categories, and the Textbook 2 presented twelve categories.

Key words: reading questions, Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy.

Reading is categorized as an important skill that sustains other language skills since the written words are the sources of knowledge for readers. Richards and Renandya (2002:273) affirm that reading receives a special focus since the written texts serve various pedagogical purposes in which comprehending the written texts can enhance the process of language acquisition.

Teaching English in Indonesia defines reading as one of the language skills to be learnt from grade IV of elementary to senior high schools (the Board of National Education Standard, 2006). Even though reading is learnt from an early stage, it is often found difficult for many readers. One apparent reason of the difficulty in reading is that not all the messages of the text get into the readers’ minds. It is obvious that the meaning of the text is unfortunately no guarantee that the readers will get it out, a text that seems easy to one person may seem difficult to another (Nuttall, 1982:5).

Considering the difficulty of mastering reading skill, there are many techniques applied by teachers to encourage the students to be able to make sense of the written words. According to Turner (1988:217), one of the most commonly used techniques for teaching or improving reading comprehension is questioning. It is because questions play a central role in comprehension instruction because they can be used to develop concepts, build background, clarify a reasoning process, and even lead the students to a higher level thinking (Gunning, 1992:231). Improving the students’ level of thinking is very important since it may lead the students to be active readers, they can become critical readers, and further, they can become creative readers. Hence, it is important to realize and concern the nature of questions.

One way to assess the nature of questions is by using taxonomy. Taxonomy is a
system for classifying the levels of abstraction of the questions that commonly occur in an educational setting, and one of the widely used taxonomy is Bloom’s Taxonomy. Sanders (1966:6) argues that the taxonomy of questions provides a useful standard in evaluating instructional materials, including textbooks. In teaching English, the textbooks are commonly used to help a teacher deliver the materials. However, a study conducted by Sanders (1966:6) showed that some textbooks have not fulfilled all the levels of thinking. He (1966:6) declares that many textbooks offered only recalling questions at the end of each chapter. Further, there emerges difficulties for the teachers to improve the students’ levels of thinking.

Alarmed by the essentials of the reading questions to improve the students’ levels of thinking, and the condition of the exiting reading questions in the textbooks, the researcher decided to conduct a study that aims to describe the nature of reading questions based on Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy. This study chose Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy for evaluating the reading questions although Bloom’s Taxonomy is not specified to evaluate the questions in English Language Teaching (ELT). This study took the chance to try out Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy in the use in ELT as it is claimed that the revision gives much greater weight to the teachers’ usage in educational setting. In addition, it provides the identification of the complexity of questions in more detail than the original taxonomy, and also the requirement of a strict hierarchy in the original taxonomy has been relaxed to allow the categories to overlap one another (Krathwohl, 2002:215). Hence, the specific research problems for this research are: 1) what kinds of reading question forms are found in the textbooks; 2) what Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy categories are found in the textbooks; 3) what is the percentage of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy categories of each text type presented in the textbooks.

**METHOD**

This study used a descriptive-quantitative design since this study involved the collection of data for the purpose of describing the existing condition; in this case the condition of reading questions in the textbooks. The research objects involved two English textbooks as there was no previous study in the same field working on the textbooks of the different publishers. For the first textbook or Textbook 1, the textbook selected was an English textbook published by the government (penerbit Pusat Perbukuan Depdiknas), *Developing English Competencies for Senior High School Student Grade X*, and the second textbook or Textbook 2 was an English textbook published by the non-government publisher (penerbit Erlangga), *Look Ahead 1 for Senior High School Students Year X*. The data were collected from both English
textbooks focusing on post-reading questions of the monologue texts in grade X which included recount, narrative, procedure, descriptive, and news item.

In order to gain the data, two instruments were used. First, an interview guide as the guidance to help the researcher do semi-structure interview with the English teachers of public senior high schools in Malang. Second, five identification sheets were used for analyzing the reading questions: (1) identification sheet for the data collection, (2) identification sheet for question forms, (3) identification sheet for the cognitive process dimension, (4) identification sheet for the knowledge dimension, and (5) identification sheet for Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy.

The processes of collecting data were explained as follows. The first was selecting all the post reading questions and categorizing the reading questions into the recount, narrative, procedure, descriptive, and news item texts. Then, the data were analyzed based on the question forms, and the researcher counted the percentage of each form by dividing the total number of each question form by the total number of reading questions and multiplied by 100%. After that, the data were analyzed based on Revised Bloom’s taxonomy, and the researcher counted the percentage of the categories by dividing the total number of each category in each text type by the total number of reading questions, and multiplied by 100%. According to Frazee and Rudnitski in Nurisma (2010:39), reading questions are constructed well if the levels of questions are presented in balance. In other words, the ideal distribution of the questions provided in the textbooks were expected to cover 50% of the high levels thinking (analyzing, evaluating, and creating); and 50% the low levels of thinking (remembering, understanding, and applying)

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In Textbook 1, 150 post reading questions were found within 18 reading texts, and there were 166 post reading questions within 25 reading texts in Textbook 2. Further, the results of this study were separated based on the research questions.

**Reading Questions Forms in the Textbooks**

In Textbook 1, there were six question forms: WH-questions, multiple choice questions, true-false questions, yes-no questions, alternative question, and completion. Moreover, in Textbook 2, there were twelve question forms: WH-questions, identification, completion-answer, completion, description, making essay, filling the blank, mentioning things, yes-no questions, alternative questions, true-false questions, and ordering question.
Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy Categories in the Textbooks

Textbook 1 consisted of six categories out of 24 of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy categories: remembering factual knowledge, understanding factual knowledge, understanding conceptual knowledge, applying factual knowledge, applying conceptual knowledge, and analyzing conceptual knowledge. Besides, there were nine categories found in Textbook 2: remembering factual knowledge, understanding factual knowledge, understanding conceptual knowledge, analyzing factual knowledge, analyzing conceptual knowledge, evaluating factual knowledge, evaluating conceptual knowledge, creating factual knowledge, and creating conceptual knowledge.

The Percentage of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy in Each Text Type in the Textbooks

The percentage of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy in each text type was distributed imbalance in both textbooks. It was shown in the tables below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Category</th>
<th>BOOK 1 (%)</th>
<th>BOOK 2 (%)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, the percentage of recount texts based on Table 1 showed that in Textbook 1, A1 within (????) 69.2%, and A2 30.8%. In Textbook 2, the percentage of recount texts covered A1 47.5%, A2 15%, A4 7.5%, B2 10%, and B4 20%. Thus, all reading questions in Textbook 1 were 100% in the low levels of thinking, and in Textbook 2, the questions in the low levels of thinking covered 72.5% and in the high levels of thinking covered 27.5%.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>The Category</th>
<th>BOOK 1 (%)</th>
<th>BOOK 2 (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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</table>
Second, Table 2 presented the percentage of narrative texts in both textbooks. In Textbook 1, A1 was 34%, A2 56%, A3, B2, and B3 2%, and A4 4%; and in Textbook 2, A1 was 13.6%, A2 39.4%, B2 15.2%, A4 10.6%, A5 7.6%, A6 1.5%, B4 6.1%, B5 4.5%, and B6 1.5%. Therefore, Textbook 1 had six categories with 96% questions in the low levels of thinking and 4% in the high levels of thinking. Textbook 2 had nine categories with the questions in the low levels of thinking (68.2%), and in the high levels of thinking (31.8%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Category</th>
<th>BOOK 1 (%)</th>
<th>BOOK 2 (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
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Third, the next percentage was the percentage of procedure texts. As Table 3 showed, Textbook 1 included A1 within 62.5%, and A2 37.5%. Textbook 2, the percentage of procedure texts included A1 42.8%, B2 14.3%, A4 14.3%, and B4 28.6%. In short, all reading questions in Textbook 1 were 100% in the low levels of thinking, and in Textbook 2, 57.1% of the questions were in the low levels of thinking, and 42.9% of the questions were in the high levels of thinking.

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<tr>
<th>The Category</th>
<th>BOOK 1 (%)</th>
<th>BOOK 2 (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fourth, the percentage of descriptive texts in both textbooks was presented in Table 4. In Textbook 1, A1 was 71%, A2 22.6%, and B2 6.4%. Textbook 2, the percentage of descriptive texts contained A1 21.6%, A2 21.6%, B2 43.2%, A4 2.7%, B4 8.2%, and B5 2.7%. To sum up, all reading questions in Textbook 1 were 100% in the low levels of thinking, and in Textbook 2, 86.4% of questions in descriptive texts were the questions in the low levels of thinking and 13.6% of the questions were in the high levels of thinking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Category</th>
<th>BOOK 1 (%)</th>
<th>BOOK 2 (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Fifth, Table 5 gives the picture of the percentage of news items. In Textbook 1, A1 was 45%, A2 45%, and B2 10%; and in Textbook 2, the percentage of news items consisted of A1 50%, A2 12.5%, B2 18.75%, A4 6.25%, B4 6.25%, and B5 6.25%. Therefore, all reading questions in Textbook 1 were 100% in the low levels of thinking. Besides, Textbook 2 covered 81.25% questions in the low levels of thinking and 18.75% questions in the high levels of thinking.

**Reading Question Forms Presented in the Textbooks**

The results of the analysis showed the patterns of the two textbooks in terms of the question forms. The first pattern was that both textbooks concentrated the question forms into *WH-questions*. It could be seen from the fact that around 50% of all reading questions in both textbooks were in the form of *WH-questions*. It was good for a book to have many questions in the forms of *WH-questions* as *WH-questions* can make the students think harder to understand or give the greater scope of answers. According to Nuttall (1982:130), *WH-questions* force the students to think things out for themselves.

Besides, the significant difference was the variety of the question forms in both textbooks. Textbook 1 which was published by the government had six kinds of question forms, while Textbook 2 which was published by the non-government publisher had twelve kinds of question forms. The difference in the variety of the question forms in both textbooks indicated that the authors in Textbook 2 concerned with the question forms. Actually, it was good for both teachers and students to know the variation of the question forms. By knowing the varieties of the question forms and by giving models to the students which show the importance of the directive power of each question form, the teachers can help the students anticipate the nature of required answers better (Turner, 1988:218). However, Nuttall (1982:128) argues that the thing that makes the question forms easier is usually the answer not the question itself, and we shall be interested to concern in students’ reply rather than in the forms.

Hence, the forms of question were not the big deal, but it was necessary for the textbooks to have various forms of questions related to the reading texts to make sure that the students were familiar with various question forms since the forms of questions have their own nature. Turner (1988:218) confirms that by understanding the classifications of questions, including question forms, the teachers and the students are

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>B5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.25</td>
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helped to ask better questions and give better answers.

**Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy Categories in the Textbooks**

The results of the study showed that Textbook 2 covers more categories than Textbook 1. Besides *remembering factual knowledge, understanding factual knowledge, understanding conceptual knowledge, and analyzing conceptual knowledge*, Textbook 2 also has *analyzing factual knowledge, evaluating factual knowledge, evaluating conceptual knowledge, and creating conceptual knowledge*. Nevertheless, Textbook 1 has *applying factual knowledge and applying conceptual knowledge* while Textbook 2 excludes the category: *applying*.

It implied that the authors of Textbook 2 gave the students more chances than the authors of Textbook 1 did in enhancing the levels of thinking. By providing the questions in the high levels of thinking, the students would be active readers who not only take the information stated in the text directly, but also thought beyond the text, and were able to create ideas, plans, or products. Turner (1988:161) confirms that the questions in the high levels of thinking involve the readers to bring knowledge and experience to the act of reading, draw inferences, and apply reading to life situation, and the readers are reading actively not receptively and passively. If the students are accustomed to thinking beyond the literal meaning, they will be able to implement it into their daily lives. For example, if they read newspapers, they will not easily trust the information given. They will try to think the tendencies that may be involved.

In addition, the category in the *knowledge dimension* occurred in the *factual knowledge* and *conceptual knowledge*. There was no question with *procedural knowledge* and *meta-cognitive knowledge*. It was possible that the authors did not much concern into *procedural knowledge* and *meta-cognitive knowledge* in the post reading questions. Since *procedural knowledge* deals with methods or skills in doing something (Rahmawati, 2012:56), it could be inferred that the authors might give *procedural knowledge* in the instructions.

Furthermore, *meta-cognitive knowledge* is such a skill which is difficult to be measured from the existing post reading questions. The teachers can observe the students’ responses while they are doing the assignment, examination, and answering questions. Pintrich (2002:224) confirms that it is more likely that the assessments of *meta-cognitive knowledge* by the teachers will be informal rather than formal. According to Vacca, Vacca, and Gove (1991:12), the teachers can help the students to develop *meta-cognitive knowledge* by using instructions in the teaching and learning process, especially in the discussions which involve the meta-cognitive questions, for instance, *do you recognize that some texts are harder than others?* However, if the
results of the study were compared with the results of the previous studies which were conducted by using Barret’s Taxonomy, the implication would be very different. The previous study which used Barret’s Taxonomy found that there were three out of four levels of Barret’s classification system (Sunggingwati, 2001), and the study conducted by Prasetyarini (2007) found that there were the four levels of Barret’s classification in the reading questions. Seeing that there were six out of 24 Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy categories in Textbook 1, and there were nine out of 24 Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy categories in Textbook 2, it led to a speculation that Bloom’s taxonomy, even it had been revised to be used in much greater weight to the teachers’ usage in educational setting, it was not really suitable with the use of it in ELT, especially in reading comprehension. It could be offered that it was better to use Barret’s Taxonomy as the taxonomy to evaluate the reading questions in ELT.

Thus, based on the analysis by using Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy, it was possible that the teachers covered the limitation of questions in the high levels of thinking to train and improve the students’ thinking. Furthermore, this study had tried Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy in the use in ELT, and the results showed there was small number of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy categories found.

The Percentage of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy Categories in Each Text Type in the Textbooks.

The frequency of each category in both textbooks pointed out that the low level questions were dominant. Regarding the purpose of the study which was to uncover the range of each category in each text type, it could be investigated that among the five text types, which were recount, narrative, procedure, descriptive, and news item, the narrative text is the text which presents the highest number of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy categories. From both textbooks, the narrative texts contributed more categories compared to other text types. It could be inferred that the narrative text is the most potential text type to produce the wide range of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy categories (wide range of categories means that the questions are not only in the low levels of thinking but also in the high levels of thinking). Thus, a much deeper indication was that the type of text gives influence in facilitating the questions with a wide range of category in Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy.

Next, the distribution of the reading questions in all text types was not balanced in both textbooks. There were two possible reasons behind it. First, the authors’ awareness toward the nature of the question objectives was still low. They often took it for granted without having much concern that their textbooks can be one of the factors in improving the students’ levels of thinking. The authors might think that as long as the
questions were based on the texts, their jobs were done. This indication was
strengthened by the findings from the previous studies conducted by Nurisma (2010)
and Rahmawati (2012). All of them found out that the textbooks which were analyzed
contained the overemphasized of the reading questions in the low levels of thinking.

Second, the indication could also go to the authors’ creativity in developing the
reading questions. The authors might not think much in developing the various kinds of
the questions, so they felt satisfied with the questions which were similar to each other.
Although it could be argued that creating questions with the balanced distribution was
not easy, the authors still had the important roles and responsibility in the sense that they
should be able to design the questions creatively containing both the low and high levels
of thinking by which the students can enhance their levels of thinking. For instance, the
authors could add the questions which aimed the students to compare or make judgment
toward particular matters. The authors could also add the questions whose objectives
were asking the students to investigate the structures or the principles, or to produce
ideas, plans, and products.

In addition, it was clear that the distributions of the questions between the low
and high levels of thinking in both textbooks were imbalanced. Many of them consisted
of the over emphasized questions in the low levels of thinking. Somehow, the lower
levels of thinking could facilitate the students to the higher levels of thinking. According
to Gatheral in Turner (1988:220), some research indicates that effective questions
involving lower thinking are most crucial to develop thinking, even for the higher levels
thinking.

However, Mayer (2002:227) argues that the students should deal with questions
that go beyond remembering and beyond factual knowledge to have meaningful learning
(meaningful learning is recognized as an important educational goal since it is learning
something by thinking about it carefully or understanding it, and also applying it into a
new situation as well as being able to produce ideas, plans, or products from it) than rote
learning (learning something by remembering it without thinking about it or without
understanding it). Too many emphases in the lower levels of thinking could not train the
students to be critical readers as they read passively.

Turner (1988:187) adds that as the individual reader comprehends at high levels,
she/he may become more sensitive and aware of her/his thought processes. A kind of
growth cycle seems to follow with increased awareness tending to develop increased
ability to comprehend. Besides, literal comprehension or question with a low level of
thinking was necessary, but not sufficient for the high levels comprehension to occur.
The high level comprehension involves greater amounts of information and often deals
with greater complexities of relationships.
Thus, both questions in the low and high levels of thinking are important, so the
distribution between the questions in the low and high levels of thinking should be in
balance. However, the questions in the lower levels of thinking should be settled
properly before moving to the higher levels of thinking as Turner (1988:288) states that
the reading teacher should take care not to move quickly beyond literal post reading
questions. In other words, he suggests that the questions given should be step by step,
beginning from the questions in the low levels of thinking and continued to the
questions in the high levels of thinking.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion of the results, the conclusions of the study
can be drawn: (1) Textbook 1 consisted of six kinds of question forms. Moreover, in
Textbook 2, there were twelve question forms; (2) Textbook 1 consisted of six
categories out of 24 of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy categories: remembering factual
knowledge, understanding factual knowledge, understanding conceptual knowledge,
applying factual knowledge, applying conceptual knowledge, and analyzing conceptual
knowledge. Besides, there were nine categories found in Textbook 2: remembering
factual knowledge, understanding factual knowledge, understanding conceptual
knowledge, analyzing factual knowledge, analyzing conceptual knowledge, evaluating
factual knowledge, evaluating conceptual knowledge, creating factual knowledge, and
creating conceptual knowledge; (3) The distribution of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy
categories in each text type was not balanced. The category in the low levels of thinking
had higher portion than the category in the high levels of thinking. In Textbook 1, the
percentage in the recount text was 100% questions in the low levels of thinking, the
narrative text was 96% questions in the low levels of thinking and 4% questions in the
high levels of thinking, the procedure text was 100% questions in the low levels of
thinking, the descriptive text was 100% questions in the low levels of thinking, and the
news item was 100% questions in the low levels of thinking. In Textbook 2, the
percentage in the recount text was 72.5% questions in the low levels of thinking and
27.5% questions in the high levels of thinking, the narrative text was 68.2% questions in
the low levels of thinking and 31.8% questions in the high levels of thinking, the
procedure text was 57.1% questions in the low levels of thinking and 42.9% questions in
the high levels of thinking, the descriptive text was 86.4% questions in the low levels of
thinking and 13.3% questions in the high levels of thinking, and the news item was
81.25% questions in the low levels of thinking and 18.75% questions in the high levels
of thinking.
Suggestions

Based on the conclusion, the writer would like to offer suggestions to: (1) the English teachers to improve the practice of the reading questions which are balanced both the questions in the low and high levels of thinking; (2) the textbook authors to revise and improve the reading questions which lead the students to reach meaningful learning other than rote learning outcomes; (3) and future researcher(s) to use other taxonomies to evaluate the reading questions, especially Barret’s Taxonomy as the discussion has explained that Barret’s Taxonomy is a better taxonomy in evaluating reading questions.

REFERENCES


