



# Students' Reading Competency on High Order Thinking Items in The Junior High Schools

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## ABSTRACT

The aimed of this study was to describe and compare the students' reading competency in answering high order thinking items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators. In the present study, critical reading is defined as reading for comprehension of high-order-thinking items which are focused on the four indicators of reading competency, namely: main idea, specific ideas, textual references, and word meanings. This research was conducted quantitatively and focus on year seven students. To reach such purpose, a purposive sampling technique was used to choose the sample. The subjects of this study were 238 students. The instruments used to collect the data was a Reading Competency Test. The collected data were analysed quantitatively and interpreted descriptively. The first finding of this research shows that the level of the students' reading competency in answering high order thinking items are categorized weak or low level on both the descriptive texts and recount texts which is the descriptive

text and finding main idea are the highest mean score. The second finding shows that there is no significant difference of students' reading competency in answering high order thinking items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators which is analysed by using One Way ANOVA with significant score is 0.054.  $> 0.05$ , thus  $H_0$  is accepted and  $H_1$  is rejected. The result of the study is an important information about the students' reading competency in answering HOTS items. it is necessary to do next research in order to design future effective educational strategy or educational policy in learning.

## 1. Introduction

One of the skills in language learning is reading. Reading as one of the skills for learning and is important element to get the knowledge (Fitriana, 2011; Ntereke & Ramoroka, 2017). Reading as one of the necessary activity for the students, because this activity give them many knowledge from the textbooks and help them to understand the teaching materials or even solve their problems in studying (Al Nazhari et al., 2016). Reading can be defined as the process of constructing meaning from written text (Richard in Fitriana, 2011). In reading, the readers need to combine information from the text and the background knowledge to get the meaning of the words. The role of reading activities in language learning also develop the good writing style because students may enrich their vocabulary and grammatical structure of the written language (Delfi & Yamat, 2017). In order to comprehend the text, the reader must be able to infer the implicit information in the written text (Lipson, 1982). However, there are many researches on reading proficient show that reading is a complex process for the readers (Irawati, 2014; Silalahi, 2017; Wilson, 2016). It is integrated with the other skills in language learning. Thus, many EFL learners are difficult to master the reading skill because it involves determining main idea, identifying specific information, reference, inference, and vocabulary (Ita Retno Sari, Ari Nurweni, 2015).

The ability to read is considered to be important since there are many researches and investigations in reading competency for decades (Ghabanchi & Behrooznia, 2014; Kaya, 2015). Moreover, national examination for junior high school mostly in reading and require the students are able to answer the reading test. In fact, reading in a foreign language is strongly linked with thinking in that language

(Kaya, 2015). Thus, reading competency is not separated with the cognitive process, which is not a kind of visual only, but also the knowledge (Kalayci & Humiston, 2015 in Kaya, 2015).

In EFL, critical reading is indicated by the ability to answer high order thinking (HOT) items contained in the text. Through reading students are able to draw the meaning of words and get information from the text (Hirsch, 2003). For this, the students need to think critically in order to understand what the writer implies in the text. According to Shor as cited in (Taglieber, 2000) describes critical literacy as the ability of analytical in thinking, reading, writing, speaking or discussing that go under the surface of impressions and understanding the social contexts and consequences of any subject matter, and also finding out the deep meaning of any events, texts, objects or situation and then applying that meaning to the own context. In line with Flynn 1989 (as cited in Taglieber, 2000) critical reading is an interactive process using several levels of thought simultaneously, for example; analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Thus, critical reading is necessary for EFL's students because they would be able to evaluate, clarify, seek possibilities and alternatives, and solve the problem logically.

In Indonesia, reading is one of the EFL's skills that is taught beside writing, speaking, and listening. Especially in the Junior and Senior High Schools, reading is geared toward the attainment of competency. Reading is the skill that is developed in curriculum 2013. According to the Curriculum 2013, competency is broadly defined as a set of attitude, knowledge, and skills in comprehending the texts structures and contents of the text (Kemdikbud, 2013). Despite of the new scientific-oriented curriculum deployed since 2013, the EFL students' reading competency has not been attained satisfactorily as expected. Nor the refinement of reading strategies were endeavoured since then. It is proved that the PISA's score of Indonesian students in 2015 are categorized low level with the mean score is 397. The students are failed to answer high order items in reading. It is meant that Indonesian students fail to reach the baseline level of performance (Level 2) in reading, they can only handle the simplest and most obvious tasks like knowledge (C1), comprehension (C2), and application (C3).

Unfortunately, the result of PISA in 2018 has been announced that Indonesian students had been tested in reading where Indonesia is ranked 72 out of 79 member countries, and the mean score is 371 (OECD, 2018). It is meant that average reading score of Indonesian students decrease from the last three year. This problem of literacy is one of the problems that must be given special attention by Indonesian government. This is because in the last few decades, the competitiveness of Indonesian among other countries tend to be less competitive in reading literacy. Thus, the reading competency of the Indonesian students are categorized in low level where the students are not able to solve the reading test item on analytical, evaluative, and creative.

There are numerous factors that can impact students in language learning (Renandya, 2013). The factors that impact the students' reading competency such as motivation, students' attitude in EFL class, and reading strategies (Pradipta & Artini, 2020; Renandya, 2013). The outer factor is from the teacher such as teacher's content and teaching method are not suitable to train the students' competency to answer high order thinking items in reading, so the students are used to answer the low order thinking items in reading. Theoretically, higher order thinking skills are including logic and reasoning, analysis, evaluation, and creation, problem solving, and judgement (Brookhart, 1918). In line with (Bloom, 1983) higher order thinking skills consist of the three top ends of Bloom's taxonomy namely; analyse, evaluate, and create (Anderson, 2001).

The other reasons that effect the reading level is the reading strategy. There is significant effect of the reading strategies are mostly influenced by the attitude to English in EFL (Anita et al., 2019; Pourhosein et al., 2016). Koda in (Pourhosein Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016) said that there are various variables that impact learners' reading competency. Some of these variables involve vocabulary knowledge, prior knowledge, metacognitive information, and reading strategies. In line with Trehearne and Doctorow (2005) cited in (Pourhosein et al., 2016) expressed that there are other factors that affect learners' reading competency. These factors are learners' reading attitudes, useful teaching on comprehension methods, versatility, text form, and being aware of various reading comprehension strategies. Thus, because of the factors that affects reading competency above most of the students are not able to answer high order thinking items in reading.

Based on the PISA's results of Indonesian students in reading shows that the students have low average score in reading competency. The students have low critical reading skill in answering High Order Thinking (HOT) items. Thus, the present study is conducted to describe and compare the students' reading competency, especially for the Junior High School students in SMP Negeri 1 Penebel, Tabanan in answering higher order thinking items or questions containing in the descriptive and recount text, and answering higher order items in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor beyond knowledge (C1), comprehension (C2), and application (C3), Receiving (A1), Responding (A2), Imitation (P1), Manipulation (P2), Precision (P3), and also comparing students' reading competency based on the classes, text genres,

and reading indicators. This research is focus on comparing students' reading competency in answering high order thinking items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators.

## 2. Methods

The design implemented in this study was a descriptive and comparative research. Data were analysed, firstly descriptively, and then, inferentially by implementing a parametric statistics, namely: 1) central tendency measures, 2) measures of dispersion, and simultaneous comparisons across classes, text genres, and reading indicators. The study was conducted in Junior High School in Tabanan, in academic year 2019/2020. A purposive sampling technique was used to choose the sample. The subjects of this study were 238 students in SMP N 1 Penebel, Tabanan and four classes were chosen as the sample.

The instruments used to collect the data was a Reading Competency Test. The Reading Competency Test was administered systematically following the procedures as follows; the instrument was administered to four different classes simultaneously; The test consisted of 25 multiple choice items which was designed to test four reading competencies' indicators (main ideas, specific ideas, textual references, and word meanings). The items were also designed in high order thinking by using operational verbs in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Each item has 4 points, and the total score is 100 points. The students did the test via online; The students worked independently on the test items for 60 minutes. To determine the reliability, the instrument was tested with 34 students who were not the participants of the study. The reliability's value was computed by using the reliability coefficient, the KR-21 formula. The reliability of the instrument was 0.823 Since the value was higher than 0.7, the instrument was reliable to assess the students' reading competency.

The data were analysed by using software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0. There are two research data analysis, namely: 1) quantitative descriptions of the students' reading competency on the English descriptive and recount texts, and 2) inferential analysis in terms of simultaneous comparison across classes, text genres, and reading indicators. Therefore, the techniques implemented for the two research questions are as follows; 1) measures of central tendency, 2) simultaneous comparison. The descriptive statistics were calculated to determine what kinds of students' reading competency across classes, text genres, and reading indicators. Then, one-way ANOVA was used to determine whether there were any significant differences of students' reading competency mean score across classes, text genre, and reading indicators.

## 3. Result and Discussion

Below is the findings of the data based on Reading Competency Test across classes, text genres, and reading competency indicators.

### Findings

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Students' Reading Competency

Statistics	Descriptive Values
Arithmetic Mean	39.62
Range	60.00
Standard Deviation	10.92
Variance	119.201

As shown in Table 1, the students' reading competency mean score is 39.62 out of the total reading competency score is 100. Categorically, the students' reading competency in high-order-thinking items are low level on both the descriptive texts about a person, an animal, a place, a procedure, and recount texts about a personal experience as well as an accident (in the range scores between 12.00 to 72.00). The students' range score discloses another interesting fact about the students' reading competency in SMP Negeri 1 Penebel. The range between the highest-scored and the lowest-scored students on the reading competency is equal to 60.00. Therefore, the students' reading competency variability is very large (variance = 119.20).

Further analysis is conducted across classes. There are four intact classes in which the students' reading competency on high-order-thinking items were measured. The results are shown in the following table.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics of the Students' Reading Competency across classes

Statistics	Descriptive Values and Classes			
	I	II	III	IV
Arithmetic Mean	41.76	43.06	36.59	37.76
Range	44.00	44.00	60.00	36.00
Standard Deviation	10.29	10.70	11.94	9.14
Variance	105.88	114.48	142.67	83.58
Standard Error	1.765	1.835	2.05	1.57

Table 2 shows the students' reading competency averages across classes are 41.76, 43.06, 36.59 and 37.76 respectively. The differences of the mean scores across classes vary at minimum points. The mean scores of reading competency in class I is 41.76, class II is 43.06, class III is 36.59 and class IV is 37.76. The mean differences are descending down. However, categorically the students' reading competency across classes could be said in low level.

The students' range scores disclose another interesting fact about the students' reading competency in the variabilities of the reading competency scores vary across classes (variance in class I = 105.88; variance in class II = 114.48; variance in class III = 142.67 and variance in class IV = 83.58).

When the students' reading competency on higher-order-thinking items is analyzed based on the reading text types, the results are clearly shown in the following tables.

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistics of the Students' Reading Competency in Descriptive Text

Statistics	Descriptive Values and Classes				
	I	II	III	IV	Average
Arithmetic Mean	5.12	5.53	5.09	5.15	5.22
Range	6.00	8.00	9.00	7.00	7.5
Standard Deviation	1.61	2.21	2.21	2.02	2.01
Variance	2.59	4.86	4.87	4.07	4.10
Standard Error	0.28	0.38	0.38	0.35	0.35

As shown in Table 3, the arithmetic means of the students' reading competency could be ordered based on text types across classes as follows. First, the students' reading competency is the highest in class II on the descriptive text (mean = 5.53), class IV is the second highest (mean = 5.15), class I is the third (mean = 5.12) and the lowest is in class III (mean = 5.09) on the descriptive text type.

**Table 4.** Descriptive Statistics of the Students' Reading Competency in Recount Text

Statistics	Descriptive Values and Classes				
	I	II	III	IV	Average
Arithmetic Mean	5.32	5.24	4.06	4.29	4.73
Range	6.00	6.00	7.00	6.00	6.25
Standard Deviation	1.32	1.42	1.76	1.51	1.50
Variance	1.74	2.00	3.09	2.28	2.28
Standard Error	0.23	0.24	0.30	0.26	0.26

The arithmetic means of the students' reading competency could be ordered based on text types across classes as follows. First, the students' reading competency is the highest in class I on the recount text (mean = 5.32), class II is the second highest (mean = 5.24), next is class IV in the third (mean = 4.29) and the lowest is in class III (mean = 4.06) on the recount text type.

**Table 5.** Descriptive Statistics of the Students' Reading Competency Across Indicators

Indicators	Statistics	Descriptive Values and Classes				
		I	II	III	IV	Average
Main Idea	Arithmetic Mean	11.41	12.23	10.00	10.94	11.145
Specific Ideas	Arithmetic Mean	11.41	10.94	7.64	9.05	9.76
Textual Reference	Arithmetic Mean	11.29	12.00	10.47	10.47	11.06
Word/Phrase Meaning	Arithmetic Mean	7.60	7.88	8.47	7.29	7.81
	Standard Deviation	1.89	2.00	1.32	1.64	1.71

When the arithmetic means of the students' reading competency are ordered from highest to lowest based on its indicators as shown in Table 5, the order is as follows. The students' reading competency of high-order-items on main idea is the highest. It means that the students have the ability to work on finding main idea of high-order-items, followed with textual references, specific ideas and word/phrase meaning. The largest variability in terms of reading competency indicators exists in the class II, followed by class I, class IV and class III.

The second research question verifies a simultaneous comparison of several means the students' reading competency score. The analysis is conducted by using One Way ANOVA in SPSS 24 version. Particularly, this test aimed at investigating whether or not there was any significant difference in students' reading competency across classes, text genres, and reading indicators. For this, there was a hypothesis propose, it was assumed that there was no significant difference in students' reading competency across classes, text genres, and reading indicators. The result of the summary of Anova computation can be seen in the table 6 below.

**Table 6.** Summary Anova of Reading Competency

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	902.000	3	300.667	2.613	.054
Within Groups	15190.118	132	115.077		
Total	16092.118	135			

Table 6 shows the simultaneous F test (omnibus F) of students reading competency base on class, text genres, and reading indicators. From the table above shows that the significant value is  $0.054 > 0.05$ . it indicates that the average mean of the students' reading competency is not different significantly.

## Discussions

Regarding to the research findings, there are two points that need to be discussed. the first hypothesis testing was to investigate the students' reading competencies on high order thinking items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators namely; main idea, specific information, textual references, and word meanings (Latifa, 2018a), the second hypothesis testing was to investigate the significant differences in the students' reading competencies on high order thinking items across classes, text genres, and reading indicators. In general, shows the students' reading competency mean score is 39.62 out of the total reading competency score is 100. Categorically, the students' reading competency in answering high-order-thinking items are weak. The study of critical reading is also done by (Zhou et al., 2015). They investigated the students' critical thinking ability in English reading and found that most of the students lack critical reading ability in EFL reading class. The same result is also found by (Velayati et al., 2017) which is explore the students' difficulties in using critical thinking in reading because of lack of practicing.

Then, the students' reading competency on higher order thinking items is also analysed based on the reading competency indicators. When the arithmetic means of the students' reading competency are ordered from highest to lowest based on its indicators, the order is as follows. The students' reading competency of high-order-items on main idea is the highest with the average mean score 11.145. It means that the students have the ability to work on finding main idea of high-order-thinking items. Main idea is a complete simple sentence which illustrates the general idea of a text (Latifa, 2018a), followed with textual

references with the average mean score 11.06, and then specific ideas with the average mean score 9.76 and the lowest average mean score is in the word/phrase meaning indicator with the average mean score 7.81. (Astan & Tamah, 2015) investigated the correlation between vocabulary size and the reading comprehension found that the vocabulary size was significantly correlated to critical reading. In fact, the result of this study was that the students had the lowest score in vocabulary. Thus, it affects the ability of students' critical reading.

Afterwards, the computation of One-Way ANOVA shows that the simultaneous F test (omnibus F) of students reading competency base on class, text genres, and reading indicators is 0.054. it means that the result of the probability value is higher than 0.05, and then  $H_0$  is accepted and  $H_1$  is rejected. it indicates that the average mean of the students' reading competency is not significantly different across classes, text genres, and reading competency indicators.

The result of this study implies that both of the students and EFL teachers need to train intensively and extensively in teaching and learning reading processes. The students need relevant reading strategy and the teachers are necessary to improve their teaching method (Latifa, 2018b; Zhou et al., 2015). The other importance factors effecting EFL learning is classroom instruction (Ita Retno Sari, Ari Nurweni, 2015; Renandya, 2013), it implies that the teachers' instruction is become an essential role in language teaching. The empirical study about the impact of HOTS instructions in the classroom is positively good for the EFL students has been done by (Nourdad et al., 2018; Purnama & Nurdianingsih, 2019). It is an effective strategy in teaching and good for students' motivation (Nirmala, 2019; Purnama & Nurdianingsih, 2019).

Additionally, based on the research conducted in this study, it was found that there was no significant difference in students' reading competency across classes, text genres, and reading indicators. It indicated that the students' competency in reading are in the same level and still low. This study may give the information of students' reading competency level in answering High Order Thinking Items in English reading. Teaching high order thinking in the classroom is useful for creating meaningful learning because learning is not only getting knowledge but also the ability to apply the knowledge in life (ilma, 2018). Thus, the improvement in teaching strategy and educational policy are necessary to increase the educational quality.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the previous findings and discussion, it could be concluded that, the level of the students' reading competency in answering high order thinking items are categorized as low level on both the descriptive texts and recount texts with the highest mean score of students' reading competency in high order thinking items across text genres was the descriptive text. In the part of reading competency indicators, the main idea indicators became the highest mean score of student reading competency in reading. There was no significant difference of students' reading competency in answering high order thinking items across classes, text genres, and reading competency indicators. Future studies are recommended to explore the effective way in teaching critical reading in Junior high school, and the result of this study can be used as the information in designing future effective educational strategy in teaching.

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