

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

As global progress accelerates and competition intensifies, education is expected to move beyond the transmission of facts and emphasize the development of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). As outlined by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), the revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy, HOTS consists of analyzing, evaluating, and creating. This concept is increasingly being emphasized in various national education policies, one of which is the Merdeka Curriculum, which adopts core competency-based learning and HOTS-based evaluation to prepare Indonesia's generation for critical thinking and creativity (Kemendikbud, 2023).

Moreover, Higher Order Thinking Skill (HOTS) is a form of thinking ability that calls for higher-order skills like creativity and critical thinking along with memory (Ariesta, 2018). Seman, Yusoff, & Embong (2017) also argued that HOTS is a level of thinking that prioritizes problem-solving, decision-making, reflective analysis, application of previously acquired knowledge, and creation of new things.

However, Brookhart (2010) stated HOTS seems to be the highest level in Bloom's cognitive hierarchy. HOTS is classified as both a learning tool and an assessment item. (Putu Ayu Laras Pradnyani Nirmala Giri, 2021). The HOTS model is

considered an appropriate learning method to develop or improve high-level thinking skills (Tyas and L. Naibaho, 2021). Thus, HOTS is a high-level cognitive activity that includes the capacity for critical, creative, and logical analysis and evaluation, along with the development of new concepts in Bloom's cognitive taxonomy.

Likewise, there are still many obstacles in the use of high-level thinking skills (HOTS) in junior high schools. As a result, teachers try to modify the content of learning strategies to foster critical and creative thinking in students, but many of them run out of knowledge and also adequate professional training. Brookhart's (2010) research also shows that many teachers still apply traditional teaching methods that focus on memorization and literal understanding so that students are less trained in analyzing and evaluating information in depth. Students have difficulty in mastering the basic concepts needed for higher mastery because there are different academic level systems. Consequently, teachers find it difficult to plan and implement learning strategies that accommodate all students. Therefore, this creates inequality in the implementation of HOTS in various schools in Indonesia.

In addition, learning environment factors also influence the effectiveness of HOTS implementation. Research by Indah and Kusuma (2021) revealed that limited resources in some schools, such as the lack of teaching materials designed to support HOTS, are a major obstacle for teachers in creating a challenging and interactive learning environment. On the other hand, the diversity of students'

academic backgrounds in one class is also a challenge in itself. Suparman's research (2020) shows that in one class there is often a crucial difference between students with high critical thinking skills and students who still have difficulty understanding basic concepts. This inequality requires teachers to find the right approach so that all students can develop HOTS optimally.

In addition to academic challenges, cultural aspects of education in Indonesia also influence the implementation of HOTS. Setiawan and Hadi (2022) stated that many schools are still oriented towards exam results and academic grades. As a result, the teaching methodology focuses more on rote learning than on in-depth exploration of the concepts taught. Therefore, students become unfamiliar with learning approaches that expect them to think critically, reflect, and produce creative solutions to problems.

However, several studies indicate that teachers can implement HOTS effectively by using the right strategies, helping students develop more critical and creative thinking skills. For example, a study by Indriyana and Kuswandono (2019) entitled "*Developing Students' Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Reading*" revealed something. Teachers who apply open-ended questions, problem-based discussions, and reflective feedback aim to foster their students' critical thinking skills in comprehending English texts. Instead, this study only looked at reading skills. The last study is Tyas and Naibaho (2021) which states "*HOTS Learning Model Improves Quality Education.*" It was revealed through research that

learning models based on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) improve the education standard by developing critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and skills in problem-solving. In fact, teachers become facilitators as students actively think, imagine, and find real problems to solve during their learning process.

In contrast to earlier research, this study will explore the strategies used by English teachers in developing HOTS at the junior high school level in Indonesia.

Using a narrative inquiry approach, this study will explore teachers' experiences in depth to understand the methods they use and the challenges they face in implementing HOTS in the classroom. Through this study, it is hoped that more effective strategies that are in accordance with students' needs can be found in EFL teaching in Indonesia. In addition, the results of this study are expected to provide insight for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers in designing a learning system that is more oriented towards developing HOTS. Thus, this study can be a basis for improving the quality of English education in Indonesia to be more adaptive to the challenges of the 21st century.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEMS

1. What are the challenges faced by teachers in applying strategies to implement HOTS in Indonesia?
2. What are the strategies used by teachers to implement HOTS in Indonesia?

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research explains how English teachers create and develop higher-order thinking skills in their teaching. As a result, the researcher will investigate the approaches and identify strategies that are both innovative and effective. It is the hope that these methods would provoke students to think of higher-order activities such as critical analysis, problem-solving, and creative thinking. Moreover, this study investigates the challenges that teachers may be facing while designing and implementing HOTS-based learning. Researchers intend that this study generate some results in HOTS-based education, especially in EFL.

1.4 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

This study will provide strategies for teachers to explore Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in Indonesia. Specifically, this study will benefit several parties. Firstly, these findings can be utilized by educators and policymakers to develop and uphold effective language learning programs in EFL contexts. Second, the results of this research can also help future researchers understand how teachers effectively design and implement strategies to promote the higher-order thinking skills necessary for EFL students to succeed. Third, the findings of this study may help EFL curriculum developers in fine-tuning teaching materials that emphasize the cultivation of higher-order cognitive skills, which can enhance EFL students' learning experiences. Finally, the learning process can encourage students to be more active in the learning process. In sum, this study will contribute to exploring

the strategies used by teachers in implementing HOTS in Indonesia.

1.5 SCOPE AND LIMITATION

The scope of this study focuses on analyzing the strategies that teachers in Indonesia use to enhance Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). The limitations of the study specifically examine English teachers at the junior high school level in Malang.

1.6 DEFINITION OF KEYWORD

1. Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) are high-level cognitive activities that involve skills such as transferring new concepts into new situations, logical explanations of a problem, creative problem solving, critical argumentation, and generalization (Brookhart, 2010).
2. Teacher strategies are the teacher's way of helping students adapt to new environments and have an impact on the emotional closeness of teachers and students (Alya Zalsabila, Samtidar, and Nur Aeni, 2023).