

Chapter I

Introduction

Background of the Study

Learning a language is an art. Language components and language features are inseparable entities in mastering a language; however, some other elements cannot be neglected. In addition to learning the language itself, learning English also means shaping students' cognition. There are four Cs that the students need to cope with in the 21st century, one of which is Critical Thinking and Problem Solving (NEA, 2017). Moreover, Griffin, et al. (2012) as quoted by Stobie (2013) also categorizes the changes in educational focus into four: (1) ways of thinking, (2) ways of working, (3) tools for working, and (4) skills for living in the world. Critical thinking is included in one of the skills needed in ways of thinking. Critical thinking refers to: (1) "awareness of a set of interrelated critical questions"; (2) "ability to ask and answer critical questions at appropriate times; and (3) "the desire to actively use the critical questions" (Browne & Keeley, 2007, p. 2).

In order to meet up the needs of acquiring the 21st century skills, students need to be equipped with critical thinking skills. In English language learning, one way to foster students' critical thinking is through Higher Order Thinking (HOT) questions in reading. Reading requires "at least four components of knowledge including knowledge of words, knowledge of language, background knowledge of the reader and the context knowledge of the reading" (Morrow, 2005 as quoted by Sunggingwati & Nguyen, 2013, p. 81) and integrates cultural and ethic differences (Sunggingwati & Nguyen, 2013). Questioning strategies in reading can trigger students to think critically and understand the text more deeply (Jacobsen, et al., 1999; Klinger, et al., 2007, as

cited by Sunggingwati & Nguyen, 2013). Questions not only serve as an assessment measurement, but they also direct the students to think in a logical sequence. “Overall, it was found that frequency of higher-order questions can be a valid process indicator as it is related to gains in students’ critical thinking skills (Renaud & Murray, 2007, p. 319).”

Bapan (2016) investigated teacher questions used in one class consisting of 25 seventh graders in a junior high school. He narrowed his investigation into four discrete segments: (1) the types of questions, (2) the frequency of the questions types, (3) the reasons teacher addressed the high frequency questions and (4) learners’ responses to the teacher’s questions. The outcome of this descriptive case study was both display and referential questions were asked by the teacher in his class; however, the referential questions dominated the overall questions. The teacher decided to use more referential questions to elicit more information and build interaction with the students. Moreover, referential questions also made his teaching livelier. On the other hand, students could also produce not only longer but also more complex responses toward the referential questions.

Previously, Sunggiwati & Nguyen (2013) conducted a research study on this matter. They explored the practice of teacher questioning in teaching reading in three senior secondary state schools in Samarinda, Indonesia. Then, it was discovered that “the teacher relied on the textbooks for pedagogies for teaching reading and for the kinds of questions they asked to some challenges in generating high-level questions in these conditions, and required assistance in order to do this” (Sunggingwati & Nguyen, 2013, p. 80).

Another study conducted by Ndun (2012) also investigated the questioning strategies the junior high school teachers used in their classroom in Soe, South Central Timor, Indonesia. Three research questions were set: (1) “What types of questions do the teachers tend to use in the

daily practices of teaching in the EFL classroom?"; (2) "What are the functions of the questions asked by the teacher?"; and (3) "How do the students respond to the questions?". The results indicated that the teachers mostly used display questions (92%) and less referential questions (8%). Ironically, display questions were low-order thinking questions which could be answered easily by recalling the information from the text.

Tamah (2003) investigated teacher questions in EFL classes. One of the four research questions in Tamah (2003) is "To what extent does each type of question influence students' participation?". This particular question was in line with the writer's research which is related to the types of question used in the classroom. Tamah's study discovered that display questions were frequently used; meanwhile referential and comprehension check were the least.

In light of the importance of critical thinking, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) has incorporated higher order thinking skills (HOTS) items in the national exam and required that teachers integrate critical thinking in their teaching (Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2019). What is crucial then is teachers' competence in enhancing their students' critical thinking through effective questioning strategies. Yet, it has been admitted that the studies in teachers' questioning strategies in Indonesia are limited (Sunggingwati & Nguyen, 2013). This study, therefore, would like to explore more on the implementation of the teacher's questioning strategies in reading classes in a private primary school in Surabaya. This study would also like to analyze whether the teacher adequately used HOT questions in his reading classes.

Research Questions/Objectives

In light of the needs and issues addressed in the background, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How were the questions presented and addressed by the teacher in the reading class?
2. What types of questions did the teacher use in teaching reading in the classroom?
3. Were the students' responses in line with the teacher's questions in terms of the thinking skill taxonomy?

Theoretical Framework

Questions are divided into two types: lower order thinking questions and higher order thinking questions. LOT (Lower Order Thinking) questions cover remember, understand and apply steps; meanwhile, analyze, evaluate and create steps are under the umbrella of HOT (Higher Order Thinking) questions.

Significance of the Study

This study is intended to contribute to the field of English language teaching both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, effective questioning will make the students focus on understanding the lesson and becoming curious on the lesson, trigger their imaginative thinking and serve as a motivation to find out new knowledge (Hussein, 2006 as cited by Hamiloglu & Temiz, 2012). "Teachers' questions may serve different functions, including focusing attention, exercising disciplinary control in the course or an instruction, encouraging students' participation and moving the lesson forward among others (Schomoossi, 2014; David, 2007 as quoted by Hussein, 2006).

Besides, questioning strategies also help students in developing the other skills such as speaking and writing with the following reasons (Browne & Keeley, 2007, p. 3):

1. “react critically to an essay or to evidence presented in a textbook, a periodical, or a Web Site”;
2. “judge the quality of a lecture or speech”;
3. “form an argument”;
4. “write an essay based on a reading assignment”; or
5. “participate in class.”

Practically, this study serves as an evaluation towards the questioning strategies implemented in the classroom. Besides, it also serves as a role-model of teaching reading in Indonesia since the questions which are used by Indonesian teachers mostly belong to lower order thinking (Sunggingwati & Nguyen, 2013).

Assumption

The study picked on understanding of students’ cognitive formation and development in the age of 7 to 11 – presumably the age group for primary students. At this age, they should be able to answer higher order thinking questions. Primary school students are under concrete operational stage. The *concrete operational stage* lasts from approximately 7 to 11 years of age (Piaget, 1952 as cited by Santrock, 2011). Children in this stage can perform “concrete operations” and “reason logically as long as reasoning can be applied to specific or concrete examples” (Piaget, 1952 as cited by Santrock, 2011 p. 288). In this stage, children have the ability to: (1) classify or divide things into different sets or subsets and to consider their interrelationships, (2) do “seriation, which is the ability to order stimuli along a quantitative

dimension such as length” and (3) “logically combine relations to understand certain conclusions”.

Scope and Limitation

This is a case-study which is limited to the practice of teaching reading in a Grade 5 classroom in a private primary school in Surabaya, Indonesia. The questions which were analyzed are questions which are related to the reading text. The participants of this study were an English Cambridge teacher and his Grade 5 students in a private primary school in Surabaya. There are approximately twenty-five Grade 5 students in the age of 10-11 years old.

Definition of Key Terms

Higher Order Thinking Questions requires deeper thinking than simply recalling information (Brookhart, 2010). “Thinking skills inventions are approaches or programmes which identify for learners translatable mental processes and/or which require learners to plan, describe, and evaluate their thinking and learning (Higgins, et al., 2005 as cited by Brookhart, 2010: 8-9).” It is in the “top end” levels of the Newer Bloom’s Taxonomy which are to analyze, evaluate and create (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001 as cited by Brookhart, 2010:5).

Reading is one of language skills which requires a person to obtain information from written literature such as a book, a reading text, etc.

Organization of the Study

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 presents the background of the study, problem statement, objective of the study, theoretical framework, significance of the study,

assumptions, the scope and limitation of the study, and definition of the key term. Chapter II deals with review of related literature and previous study. Chapter III presents research method of this study. Chapter IV presents the result and the discussion of the finding. Chapter V presents the conclusion and suggestions of the study.