

# TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON ENHANCING STUDENTS' HOTS IN READING-WRITING INTEGRATION AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

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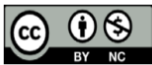
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## Abstract:

*This research aims to (1) explore teachers' challenges in enhancing students; HOTS in reading-writing integration, and (2) explore teachers' strategies to enhance students' HOTS with reading-writing integration. This research used descriptive qualitative research. This subject was six English teachers who teach at Junior High Schools in Tangerang City. The technique of collecting the data used Creswell's theory, semi-structured interview. To get the data, the researcher recorded the interview section. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis by Clarke & Braun, with identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meanings (themes) from data results. The result of this research showed that the greatest challenge for a teacher in enhancing students' HOTS consists of (1) Students, it happened because the students have different levels of cognitive understanding, concentration, character, and also habits. (2) Curriculum, it happened because every school has a different level of curriculum, and (3) Teacher competence, happened because teacher proficiency in HOTS is very limited. The teacher strategies for enhancing students' HOTS consist of (1) Implementing Complex multiple choice, (2) Conducting Essay Grouping, and (3) Giving Students Projects. Because of the limited time the researcher had, the conclusion in this study is still preliminary. Another researcher can use this to develop diverse research relevant to this research.*



**Keywords:** *Teacher Challenges; Teacher Strategies; HOTS; Reading; Writing*

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## INTRODUCTION

Reading and writing integration is an educational approach that involves the coordinated teaching of reading and writing skills. Malloy (2023), indicated this method combines the processes of teaching reading through writing and writing through reading. The goal of this approach is to enhance the learning outcomes of students by encouraging their social interaction, communication, and feedback. Reading and writing integration enables the student to become accustomed to reading, discussing,

and producing texts, thereby improving their motivation, engagement, and overall learning experience.

Scott (2017), suggested that in the 21st century, skills can be organized into two components, namely abstract skills and concrete skills. In the abstract skills related to thinking skills, included (critical and creative thinking skills). Meanwhile, the concrete skills included (communication and collaboration). Furthermore, critical and creative thinking skills are categorized as higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). Ariyana et al., (2018), stated that the purpose of learning through higher-order thinking skills is so that students can analyze, evaluate, and create something.

Bloom's taxonomy, states that the levels of categories in cognitive skills consist of 6 levels, such knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. In 2001, Anderson made a slight revision to this taxonomy and divided it into 2 categories. Lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) consist of remembering, understanding, and applying. While Higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) consist of analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

HOTS encompasses a more advanced manner of reasoning that involves categorizing, conceptualizing, and classifying information to arrive at innovative solutions to problems. The utilization of the higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) concept has several benefits, including promoting (1) transfer, (2) critical thinking, and (3) problem-solving. By focusing on HOTS in the learning process, students are better equipped to analyze complex information, synthesize new ideas, and evaluate their understanding of the material. As a result, students can develop a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Students who have achieved the HOTS level have effectively applied their knowledge and skills across a range of topics, demonstrating a strong capacity for critical thinking and reading integration. Cognitive psychology has established the crucial relationship between reading and critical thinking skills. HOTS and reading skill indicators form the foundation of the entire learning process. Students with high cognitive abilities will possess strong reading skills, and conversely, students who do not engage in HOTS typically have low reading proficiency (Dewayani et al., 2020). As same as in writing skills, through writing activities, students can express their thoughts and ideas freely and creatively. As they improve their writing skills, they can generate more ideas, thereby indirectly fostering HOTS (Tilahun et al., 2022).

Although some students may indeed be hesitant to engage in reading and writing integration, it is important to remember that this is not always the case. The reluctance of students to engage in reading and writing tasks is due to the high level of planning and thinking required for these activities. It is not uncommon for students to be rarely accustomed to such integration or reading and writing activities. This reluctance has contributed to a decline in their interest in these activities and has resulted in a negative impact on their critical thinking abilities.

In addition, students in Indonesia often resort to copying and pasting information from their sources, rather than engaging in critical reading and writing. This phenomenon is caused by the lack of proper guidance and handling for reading and writing at an early age. This can result in students being deficient in critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. As a result, when students are confronted with HOTS-based questions, they still encounter difficulties. Therefore, it is essential to develop critical reading and writing skills among students to prevent them from being negatively impacted (Erkek, 2022).

Nugroho (2018), mentioned that educators must impart HOTS to students to prepare them for the challenges posed by the fifth industrial revolution. This statement underscores the expectation that every student should be exposed to HOTS in their learning process. However, incorporating HOTS into the learning experience presents challenges for educators (Semana et al., 2017). It is because the teachers have to adjust to time management, pupil learning ability, pupil mastery, planning domain, and everything that is part of enhancing students' HOTS. To successfully integrate HOTS

into lessons, teachers must develop various strategies and adjust their classroom management, taking into account the capacity of the students and the assignments given.

Marina (2015), teacher strategies can be found in the objective of learning, giving divergent questions, student group discussion, giving feedback, and giving motivation. Additionally, it has been observed that Indonesian students are accustomed to the “copy-paste” approach, where they merely imitate what they see. Their reading and writing integration are limited to completing assignments, with no training in critical, creative thinking, and problem-solving. Therefore, students need strategies from the teachers to be able to enhance their HOTS.

Indriyana and Kuswandono (2019), the researcher investigated the teacher’s approach to employing HOTS in teaching students’ reading abilities. The researcher explored how the teacher provided tasks that stimulated students’ creative and critical thinking skills, as well as their ability to solve problems through procedural text materials. Additionally, the researcher investigated the feedback and motivation provided by the teacher to the students. The findings of the research indicate that the implementation of HOTS in reading instruction is essential. However, previous research has limitations as it only investigated the teacher’s strategies for using HOTS in teaching reading skills and only focused on the student’s perspective as recipients of the material. Therefore, the current study aims to address these limitations by exploring the challenges faced by teachers in enhancing HOTS in reading instruction and students’ responses to these strategies. The researcher will also focus on the teacher’s perspective to enhance students’ HOTS through the integration of reading and writing.

The objective of this research is to explore teacher perspectives about their challenges to enhance students’ HOTS in reading-writing integration. Also to explore their strategies to enhance students’ HOTS with reading and writing integration. This research will be conducted by posing questions to teachers about the challenges and strategies they employ in the classroom. The significance of this study lies in the fact that effective reading and writing integration can equip students with reading comprehension skills, encourage critical thinking through writing, and enhance their HOTS.

Given the aforementioned challenges, it is imperative to develop effective strategies for stimulating students’ interest and motivation in reading and writing, as well as enhancing their HOTS. In modern education, the development of higher cognitive skills has become a priority, and enhancing learners’ language proficiency is a key component of this (Gergera & Tesmand 2023). To remain competitive in a rapidly advancing world and prioritize language education, teachers need to explore new approaches, such as reading-writing integration with critical, analytical, and creative thinking, at the secondary level.

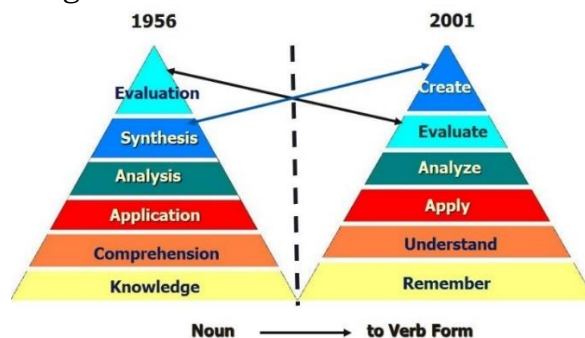
## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)**

Implementing higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) involves encouraging students to engage in critical thinking processes that go beyond mere recall of facts, rules, or formulas. Yulianti and Lestari (2018), declared that HOTS encompasses a more advanced manner of reasoning that involves categorizing, conceptualizing, and classifying information to arrive at innovative solutions to problems. HOTS requires us to engage in activities based on facts by categorizing them, manipulating them, placing them in new contexts, and being able to apply them when seeking solutions to a problem. These skills are utilized to underscore various high-level thinking processes according to Bloom’s Taxonomy.

Mohammad and Soozandehfar (2017), said that Bloom’s Taxonomy is a skeleton created by Samuel Benjamin Bloom in 1956 to categorize curriculum objectives related to explicit and implicit cognitive skills and abilities. The original taxonomy is in the

form of a pyramid which includes 6 levels of hierarchy, such as (1) knowledge, (2) comprehension, (3) application (4) analysis, (5) synthesis (6) evaluation. Bloom also classified the objective of learning into three categories, consists of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The category cognitive pertains to cerebral skills (knowledge), the category affective connects to the emotional aspect (attitudes and feelings), and the category psychomotor refers to physical abilities. Ariyana (2018), mentioned that Anderson & Krathwohl revised the Bloom Taxonomy in 2001, they posited that the pyramid consists of Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS), including C-1 (remember), C-2 (understand), and C-3 (apply), and Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), including C-4 (analyze), C-5 (evaluate), and C-6 (create). The revised Bloom's Taxonomy at the cognitive level is depicted in Figure 1



**Figure 1. Changes of Bloom Taxonomy at the Cognitive Level**

### **Reading-Writing Integration**

Reading and writing integration are educational approach that involves the coordinated teaching of reading and writing skills. Malloy (2023), expresses this method combines the processes of teaching reading through writing and writing through reading. The goal of this approach is to enhance the learning outcomes of students by encouraging their social interaction, communication, and feedback. Reading and writing integration enables the student to become accustomed to reading, discussing, and producing texts, thereby improving their motivation, engagement, and overall learning experience.

Reading and writing are often taught separately, yet both are interconnected processes that mutually benefit each other (Ballard, 2023). Integrating reading and writing can help pupils enhance their comprehension and vocabulary while also improving their writing skills.

When students engage in the process of replicating, adapting, and extending the elements and tactics they study, they can further enhance their critical thinking and creativity by exploring new genres, styles, and perspectives. This active and thoughtful engagement with literature can also be facilitated by comparing, contrasting, and synthesizing ideas from other literature sources when creating their creative composition.

Integrating students' reading and writing can present certain challenges for both teachers and students. Finding texts that match the appropriate level, interests, and needs can be quite challenging, which hinders optimal engagement in reading and writing activities. Furthermore, the improvement of higher-order thinking skills through this integration may not be optimal. These challenges are further compounded when teachers confront difficulties in teaching these skills.

Seman et al., (2017), stated that there are some challenges teachers when enhancing higher-order thinking (HOT) with reading and writing integration that are still felt by teachers. Such as 1) Time, 2) Pupil learning ability, 3) Pupil mastery, 4) Planning domain, 5) Teacher perception, 6) Teacher knowledge, 7) Teacher skills, and 8) Classroom environment.

To successfully integrate HOTS into lessons, teachers must develop various strategies and adjust their classroom management, taking into account the capacity of the students and the assignments given. The integration of reading and writing in the learning process can be influenced by the goals, objectives, and curriculum. Pre-writing activities can involve using texts as stimuli for brainstorming, planning, and organizing writing tasks (Ballard, 2023). Students may commence the process by reading a short story and then writing their version using altered characters, settings, or plots based on their understanding.

During the writing process, students can utilize texts as references, guides, and feedback for their writing tasks. And the teacher has a role for students in that. Post-writing activities can involve using texts as tools for revising, editing, and evaluating writing tasks. Students can become accustomed to critical, creative, and analytical thinking, and enhance their Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) related to their reading and writing abilities by incorporating those strategies (Marina, 2015).

Marina (2015) asserts that there are several strategies for enhancing the HOTS of students with reading and writing integration, based on teachers' faces. Such as 1) Learning objective, 2) Divergent questions, 3) Group discussion, 4) Giving feedback, and 5) Giving motivation.

## **METHODS**

The research method employed in this study is qualitative research. Qualitative research was chosen as it enables the researchers to apply a set of procedures used for problem-solving based on factual data. As highlighted by Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative methods are an approach to understanding inquiry that is grounded in various methodological traditions of inquiry, and that seeks to explore social or human problems.

The researcher aims to analyze the teacher's challenges when enhancing students' HOTS in reading-writing integration and the teacher's strategies to enhance students' HOTS using reading and writing integration. Related to this assertion, the researcher employed the descriptive with a qualitative approach to explore the teacher's perspectives.

### **Participants**

The participants consisted of six English teachers. The researcher applied specific research at the Tangerang city area, which consists of three junior high schools. There are MTS Al-Manhsuriyah, SMPN 23 Kota Tangerang, and SMPN 24 Kota Tangerang. The researcher took this to several schools because the researcher has access to the school.

### **Procedures**

In this research, the interview technique was employed as data data-collecting technique, with a focus on semi-structured interviews. The researcher interviewed six English teachers who teach at the secondary level in the Tangerang city area. The interview was conducted after the teacher finished the teaching and learning process to obtain verbal responses from the participants. The purpose of the interview in this study was to factual data based on teachers' perspectives after they do the teaching and learning process. In addition, interviews were also used to ensure that the data obtained was valid.

The researcher used the interview technique which will then be recorded during the process. Then the results of the recording were used as data in this study. The data collection process applied in this study is divided into several steps which will be explained below: a) The researcher prepares guided questions for semi-structured interviews and also the recording device for to interview, such as pen, paper, and a recorder, b) The researcher asked for permission from the participants to record their answers, c) The researcher transcribes the interview into texts.

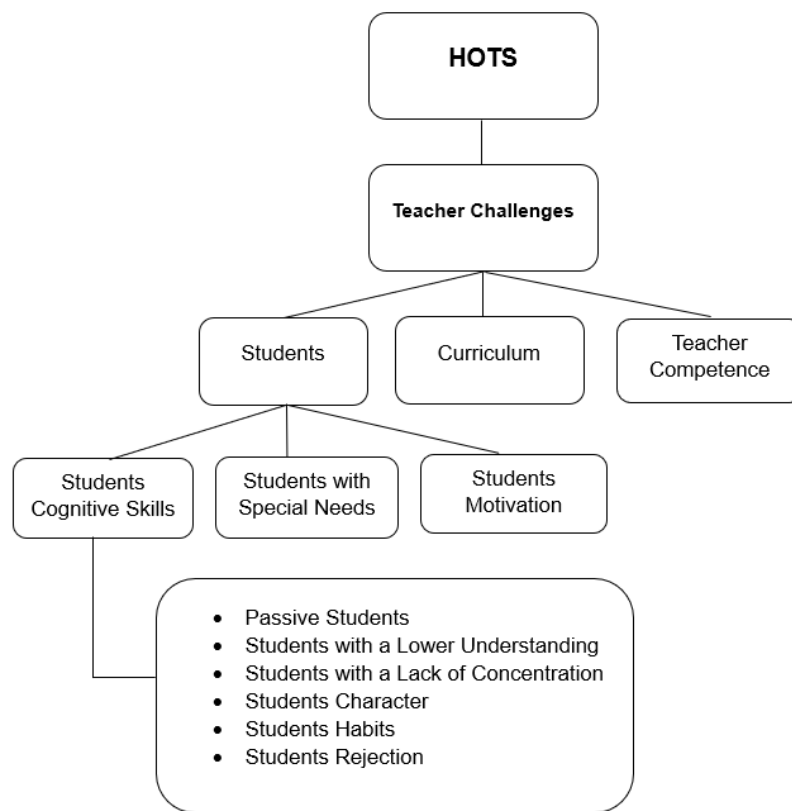
## Data analysis

In this research, the researcher uses the thematic analysis method for technique analyzing data. Clarke and Braun (2017), defined Thematic Analysis (TA) as a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within qualitative data. According to Jansen (2023), thematic analysis has six phases in analyzing the data, consisting of: 1) Familiarizing the data, 2) Generating initial code, 3) Searching for themes, 4) Reviewing potential codes, 5) Defining and naming themes, 6) Producing the repost.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This part focuses on discussing the result of the interview with the participants, after collecting and analyzing the responses using thematic analysis to interpret and analyze the data, about the teachers' challenges and strategies.

### Teacher Challenges



**Figure 2. Summary of Teacher Challenges Results**

### Theme 1: Challenges from Students

This challenge is one of the biggest challenges for the teacher when trying to enhance their students' HOTS in reading and writing integration. The teacher emphasizes that as an educator, they must be capable of adapting to various issues that arise from students. These issues can be categorized into several parts, such as students' cognitive skills, students with special needs, and student motivation, as elaborated below:

#### 1) Student cognitive skills

The cognitive skills of students refer to the processes involving knowledge acquisition and understanding among students which can be seen from an educational perspective. Teachers assert that each student possesses diverse cognitive abilities.

Students with cognitive impairments or low cognitive levels, typically encounter challenges, obstacles, or even difficulties during the learning process in the classroom. Some of these challenges include:

a) Passive students

A passive student can be interpreted as the behavior of students during learning, whereby those with passive behavior typically only receive what they are taught, lack enthusiasm for learning, and exhibit a lack of engagement in the learning process. In the interview sections, one representative English teacher mentioned the passive student. She said that:

*“To explain the material, there is no difficulty. But sometimes, there are still students who, when asked, do not want to ask back. If they do not understand, they will not ask. Maybe the student feels embarrassed, or sometimes it is the pronunciation that makes them embarrassed and afraid of making mistakes...”*  
(Ummi Latifah, 47)

That factor contributing to student inactivity in the classroom is typically observed during Q&A sessions conducted by the teacher. Some active students will respond positively to what the teacher teaches, such as being willing to ask questions. However, for passive students, the teacher notes that these students appear very passive while in the classroom. They may show reluctance to ask questions or fail to respond when the teacher poses questions to them.

b) Students with lower understanding

Low understanding refers to the difficulty an individual experiences in receiving and understanding a particular matter. In student cases, their a lack of understanding in delivering the material from the teachers. In the interview sections, one representative English teacher mentioned a student with low understanding.

*“The difficulty comes from the diversity of the students and the challenges therein. Therefore, when explaining the material is not done in the same typical way. Among the 35 students in the class, some grasp quickly, while others find it difficult, like that. Later on, I repeat to ensure better understanding, and usually, I also ask, “Where do you not understand?” that is how it usually goes...”* (Lisa Marwiyah, 38)

In addition, Mahpuli also mentioned the same thing about student response during the learning process. As the detailed:

*“Yes, the challenge, for example, is when I am teaching, and there is a student who says, “Sir, I do not understand” Then, I immediately think like this, “Why they do not understand? Is it my fault, or is there something wrong with delivering the lesson...”* (Mahpuli, 40)

Both representative pieces of evidence prove that each student has different abilities to grasp the material. Some students with good abilities will find it easy to comprehend the material. Conversely, students with lower ability will have difficulty understanding the material provided by the teacher. This poses a challenge for teachers as they must be able to tailor material that is suitable for acceptance or comprehension by all students within a single class.

c) Students with a lack of concentration

Concentration is the focused attitude that directs attention, thoughts, and actions into a particular matter. In student cases, lack of concentration occurs when the teacher explains the material in class. Sri Omariah, one of the teachers, mentioned this challenge in her comment.

*“Most often, if there are challenges, it is difficult for the children to concentrate, especially in the early part of seventh grade, as they are newly graduated elementary school students. Sometimes, even small things can become significant for them...” (Sri Oariah, 60)*

This quote illustrates that the level of concentration among students can be observed based on the category of the class they are in. For instance, as mentioned by the teacher regarding 7th-grade (VII) students, their concentration level is still in the stage of adjustment from primary school to secondary school. This is what sometimes causes their concentration levels to fluctuate, or it can be said to still be unstable in the learning process.

d) Students' character

Character refers to the innate qualities displayed by an individual (someone) towards a particular matter and each individual has a different character. In the student's case, the character that arose during the learning process. In the interview sections, one representative English teacher mentioned one of the student characters, feeling embarrassed. He said that:

*“Because English is a foreign language, as seen in, for example, the 9th grade. If it comes to writing, students can do it and they enjoy it. However, their reading, students are lacking. Such as when I asked them to read one by one, they felt embarrassed and hesitant...” (Mahpuli, 40)*

This statement illustrates that each student has their character. The feeling of shame that arises in students can emerge due to various factors. In the case above, the feeling of shame that arises in students is caused by their unwillingness or fear of making mistakes, such as when asked by the teacher to do something.

e) Students' habits

Habit refers to the routine behavior of an individual performed repeatedly, and systematically, and tends to become a custom. In this aspect, students' habits are observed when they are working on assignments from teachers. One representative English teacher in the interview sections mentioned student habits. She said that:

*“But some students do not want to write because they are lazy. However, since I always ask them to submit their writings or notes, they still submit everything. Even though in the end, some of them write like doctors... Therefore, my challenge is with students who write or complete assignments a bit slowly. Usually, I approach them and guide them, saying, “You must write, because I will sign it. If it is not finished, you have to complete it at home,” and the next meeting, it is already done...” (Sri Rahayu, 54)*

A similar, experience was felt by other participants when she teaches students in the classroom. Namely, the Lisa Marwiyah. She mentioned that:

*“The challenge goes back to the students' habits. In Indonesia, the literacy rate is very low, so the challenge is how to encourage them to enjoy reading. Whether they like it or not, students have to be forced to read, such as silent reading, before starting activities...” (Lisa Marwiyah, 38)*

This quote shows that students' habits are observed when they are working on assignments from teachers. According to several teacher statements, students' habitual errors are typically characterized by many factors, internal factors or external factors. Such as laziness from individual/internal factors, and environmental influence from external factors.



f) Students' rejection

The rejection by students in this case represents a form of negative response that students exhibit during the learning process. This form of rejection is evident in students who readily give up when confronted with challenging questions that require them to think more critically. In the interview sections, Fitri Yadi mentioned student rejection. He expressed that:

*"The challenge is usually when children have improper reading habits, miss words, or sometimes some children can read but do not want to read and write as well..." (Fitri Yadi, 37)*

Based on the statement from Fitri Yadi as an English teacher, it is known that student rejection can take various forms. And is similar to Sri Omariah's statement about student rejection when the teacher starts teaching in the classroom. She said that:

*"However, there are also negative responses from some students, usually saying "I don't know, Mrs" and giving up quickly. That is usually the challenge, especially with boy students..." (Sri Omariah, 60)*

Based on the teacher's statements in the evidence indicate that the student sometimes gives rejection to the teacher. Conversely, student rejection is often seen in students who easily give up when faced with challenging questions or matters related to critical thinking as it typically can impede the teaching and learning process. Thus, student rejection presents its own challenges for teachers as well. The teacher also added a statement that, the most form of rejection was given by male students.

2) Student with special needs

A special needs student, referred to as an inclusive student, exhibits differences compared to typical/normal students. Children with developmental/special needs may have various factors contributing to their condition. Typically, the primary cause of inclusive students stems from genetic factors inherited from parents. Additionally, it may also be caused by diseases or other disorders that hinder their normal growth and development like other children.

In Indonesia itself, there are still many students with special needs. The student in question is considered to have "special needs" because they behave differently from regular students. For example, the student is unable to sit still, tends to throw objects, refuses to write, and shows reluctance in completing assignments given by the teacher. Therefore, the Indonesian government facilitates special schools for these students with special needs, as known as (SLB/Sekolah Luar Biasa). To ensure they receive the same educational rights as students attending mainstream schools. However, it is not uncommon for these students with special needs to attend mainstream schools or study alongside regular students

In the interview section, one of the representative English teachers mentioned in their statement that the school where they teach admits students with special needs. Known as Sri Rahayu, she mentioned that:

*"The challenges I experience are manageable. It is only that sometimes there are students... because this school also accepts inclusive students, so there are children who cannot read yet, and that is my challenge. Because I have to guide each one of these inclusive children one by one..." (Sri Rahayu, 54)*

That evidence shows that this also presents a challenge for educators because they must adjust lessons to be easily understood by inclusive students, essentially requiring teachers to work twice as hard, accommodating both regular and inclusive students.

3) Student motivation

Motivation itself arises within an individual, consciously or unconsciously, to perform a certain action with a specific goal. In this aspect, teachers motivate students intending to encourage them to experience improvement. The students' motivation refers to something that students like and dislike akin to their interests and talents. Typically, in cases where students have interests, they are self-motivated without any support or influence. Conversely, students who do not have interests, often require support or influence to motivate themselves.

In the interview section, one of the representative English teachers mentioned in their statement that students do not have interests that can motivate them. This was expressed by Fitri Yadi. He expressed that:

*"If the child is less interested in English, they will complain, as they say, "Sir, always making this, it is difficult!". That is the negative aspect..." (Fitri Yadi, 37)*

Besides that, another statement has also come from Mahpuli. He said that in interests, usually, every student has different interests in the learning process. As the detailed:

*"Sometimes in reading, some students only prefer listening, such as being read aloud. Their friends or teachers read, like storytelling. For example, I once read the story of "Maling Kundang," and they just enjoyed listening..." (Mahpuli, 40)*

In both statements, it can be concluded that student's interests should be supported by teachers who must encourage activities such as reading. That statement is also supported by Lisa Marwiyah. She said that:

*"The challenge lies in the students' interests and talents themselves, and how to cultivate their interest so they become engaged. Typically, I provide them with readings that are suitable for their age..." (Lisa Marwiyah, 38)*

Based on the evidence above students with lower interest are characterized by exhibiting negative responses, such as complaining to the teacher or failing to complete assigned tasks. Numerous factors may contribute to this situation, including not understanding the meaning, difficulty in pronunciation, or infrequent encounters with the word. However, at times, this factor can also be attributed to students having diverse interests in the subjects.

## **Theme 2: Challenges from the Curriculum**

The variance in curriculum employed by schools can pose unique challenges for teachers. Beginning with the KTSP (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan), K-13 (Curriculum 2013), Merdeka Curriculum, and now Differentiating Curriculum, schools are currently transitioning towards utilizing a differentiated curriculum.

During the interview, one of the representative English teachers stated that students had difficulty working on the HOTS question level. He expressed that:

*"However, sometimes the HOTS questions are a bit challenging for the students here. I'm not sure about other schools, but from what I have observed here, for English, if points are given, it is below 6 or around 5.5 for HOTS issues. Sometimes students still find it difficult to work on HOTS questions, so they are still assisted with easy and moderate-level questions..." (Mahpuli, 40)*

Based on the evidence, show that the students at the school still encounter difficulties in solving higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) questions. This is because the implementation of HOTS-categorized questions by teachers remains infrequent. Upon further investigation, it was found that the difference in curriculum utilized at the

school differs from others. The school still adheres to the Merdeka curriculum as its curriculum framework.

### **Theme 3: Challenges from Teacher Competence**

Teacher competence refers to their proficiency in mastering the subjects that they teach in the field of education. In this aspect, teacher competence can be assessed by the extent of their understanding of implementing HOTS concepts to enhance HOTS among their students by implementing reading and writing integration.

Additionally, it can be observed through how frequently they integrate HOTS into their classroom instruction, including explaining concepts, creating questions, or assigning projects to students.

In the interview section, the teachers stated their knowledge of HOTS concepts. Five out of six participants mentioned that they only knew the HOTS concept as higher-order thinking skills. As expressed by two representative English teachers, they said that:

*“HOTS is short for Higher-Order Thinking Skills, that's all I know...” (Sri Rahayu, 54)*

A similar view was pointed out by another teacher, Lisa Marwiyah in this reference. She said that:

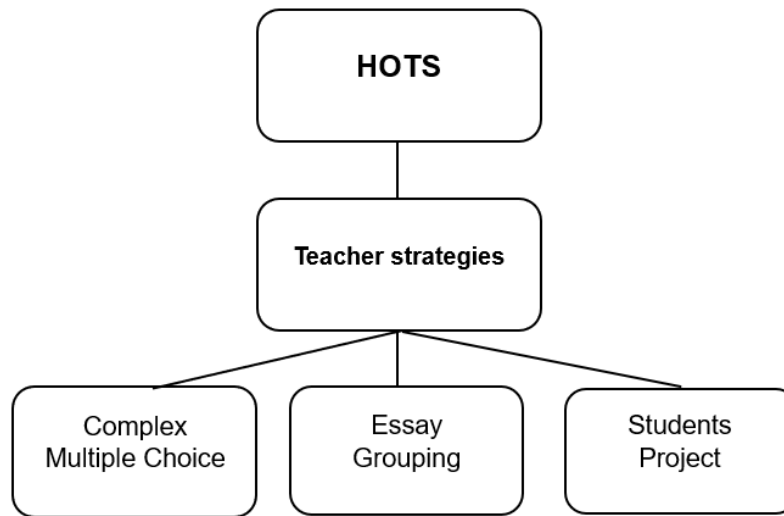
*“HOTS is an abbreviation for Higher-Order Thinking Skill, high-level thinking, that's all I know...” (Lisa Marwiyah, 38)*

Both their statement was supported by the other three participants who only knew that the HOTS concept is short for higher-order thinking skills, without knowing any other information. That statement is corroborated by Sri Omariah, who adds her statement of percentage HOTS is very low. She mentioned that:

*“Yes, it has been implemented, but not fully. At most, only 10%, because if there are too many, students will take too long to think, so it is mixed with easy-level questions, not all HOTS, to make it easier for students...” (Sri Omariah, 60)*

Based on the teacher's insight into the evidence, the data shows that teachers' knowledge and understanding of the HOTS concept is very limited. The teachers still lack understanding of the indicators encompassing HOTS. Furthermore, based on the teacher's statement above, it can be asserted that the utilization of HOTS concepts at the school, is a low percentage.

## Teacher Strategies



**Figure 3. Summary of Teacher Strategies Result**

### **Theme 1: Complex multiple choice**

Complex Multiple Choice (CMC) here refers to more difficult levels of multiple-choice questions, differing from the typical multiple-choice format, which merely involves selecting the correct answer option among choices A, B, C, or D. In the complex multiple-choice question type, students are required to select 2 - 3 correct answer choices among the multiple-choice options A, B, C, or D. However, in this type of question, students must first adapt to the instructions provided. This may involve tasks such as identifying the correct answer, identifying incorrect answers, making comparisons, or distinguishing between options.

Complex multiple-choice questions are already categorized as types of questions that encompass higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) indicators within them, including analysis and evaluation. This is because complex multiple-choice questions require students to analyze first. For instance, students are asked to distinguish, compare, or match between the question and answer, or between answers themselves. Then, in evaluation, students are required to adjust and determine between answer choices.

In the interview section, one of the representative English teachers, namely Ummi Latifah asserts that she gives complex multiple-choice students daily assignments for students to practice and also enhance their HOTS. She said that:

*“If it comes to questions, for example, multiple-choice questions, currently, it is not allowed to create similar questions. Nowadays, I typically craft questions where there are two correct answers within one question (option A answers 1 and 2, and option B answers 3 and 4). This way, students are encouraged to think critically in their responses, as there is not just one correct answer...”*  
(Ummi Latifah, 47)

Considering the quotation within the evidence provided teachers are no longer permitted to create conventional multiple-choice (simple multiple-choice) questions, rather, they are mandated to develop complex multiple-choice question types. In the teacher’s statement above before, typically in such question types, the answer is already provided within the question itself, requiring students to determine their response from the outset, and only later select the corresponding option from the multiple-choice list (A, B, C, or D).

## **Theme 2: Essay Grouping**

Grouping of essays refers to assignments given by the teacher in a group or collaborative setting. However, typically, in essay grouping, there are only consists of 2-3 students involved. Typically, for assignment distribution, teachers provide students with reading materials or texts, which are then collectively worked on. The category of the text must also align with the material the students are currently studying.

Essay grouping is also already categorized as types of questions that encompass higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) indicators within them, including analysis and evaluation. The instructions for posing questions encompass determining the type of text, discerning the text's purpose, identifying implicit/explicit meanings within the text, seeking significance, determining objectives, and other tasks that necessitate students to analyze the text or story beforehand. Subsequently, they evaluate it by searching for and determining appropriate answers. This is done to train students to think critically and creatively in problem-solving.

In the interview section, one of the representative English teachers, namely Sri Rahayu asserts that she implementing essay grouping like this for students. Because it can enhance their students' HOTS. She said that:

*“My HOTS strategy involves grouping, and for their assignments, I provide them with reading texts. Then, they seek implied and explicit meanings, references to words, the meanings of words within the text, or perhaps their antonyms and synonyms, and the purpose of the text. Since texts vary, including narrative, procedural, and report texts, they discuss these differences within their groups...” (Sri Rahayu, 54)*

Considering the quotes, it indicates that the teacher implemented grouping for students in the classroom to enhance her students' HOTS. The mechanism of questions in this essay grouping involves combining all members' answers, such as analyzing, describing, applying, or providing examples. This approach helps foster cooperation and responsibility and encourages students to confidently express their opinions while working on tasks together.

## **Theme 3: Student Project**

Student project refers to an assignment, task, or activity undertaken by a student or group of students as part of their academic coursework from the teacher at the beginning, middle, or end of the semester. However, it can also be adjusted to suit when the teacher wants to give this project assignment. Typically, student projects consist of 4-5 students in one group and are given different themes or assignments in each group.

The student's project is also already categorized as types of questions that encompass all of the indicators of the higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) concept within it, analyze, evaluate, and create. When giving students projects, they are typically tasked with designing, producing, or creating something within a work based on the theme or topic provided by the teacher. Subsequently, at the end of the project, students are required to demonstrate or present their work to the teacher and other groups. Furthermore, the mechanism or assignment of projects to students is typically conducted only 1-2 times within one semester, and it can occur at the beginning, middle, or end of the semester.

In the interview section, one of the representative English teachers, namely Mahpuli mentioned a project for students, which was one of his strategies to enhance students' HOTS. He said that:

*“Typically, the projects involve activities such as reading stories or texts in the textbook, followed by answering questions with a chairman/or compiling group*

work. Usually “create sentences in tenses”. For instance, group 1 creates the present tense, group 2 works on the past tense, and Group 3 focuses on the future tense. Then, they produce it on cardboard paper and present it later, which is the usual practice...” (Mahpuli, 40)

Based on the teacher’s statement in the evidence before, it shows that the strategy employed by the teacher in this aspect involves giving projects to students. The instructions for assigning student projects begin with providing topics to each group, allowing time for completion, and then presenting them after finishing. This project’s discussion purpose is to help students cooperate, be responsible, and encourage students to be confident.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is concluded that the teachers’ challenges to enhance students’ HOTS come from several aspects, consisting of (1) students, which consists of student’s cognitive skills, students with special needs, and student motivation; (2) curriculum; and (3) teacher competence. *The challenges from students*, happened because the students have different levels of cognitive between understanding, concentration, character, and also habits. *Then the challenges from the curriculum*, happened because every school level has a different level of curriculum. *And the last challenge from teacher competence*, happened because teacher competence about understanding of the HOTS concepts is very limited.

Besides that, the teachers’ strategies to enhance students’ HOTS, consist of (1) implementing complex multiple choice; (2) conducting group discussions between teachers with students or students with students (essay grouping); and (3) giving students projects for the first/middle/last semester. Among those strategies, implementing complex multiple choice and conducting group discussions is the predominantly utilized method by the teacher. The strategy mostly occurred because that strategy can be used as a daily assignment. Due to the researcher’s constrained timeframe, there are other challenges and strategies not mentioned in this study. Therefore, further research on this topic is needed with different approaches or methods.

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