

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English referred to as an international language that became one language we can use to communicate with others. Most people use English to communicate even when they are from different countries around the world. Many parents start teaching their children to speak and use English as early as possible. They may even enroll them in an international school or an English tutoring program to help them become fluent in English. Because the English ability is necessary for the workplace.

In addition, English has been taught in Indonesia's educational system starting in the lower grades. Students learn English from the first class of elementary school until the third class of senior high school. At school the teacher focuses on lessons on speaking, reading, writing, and listening that are provided by the government. Since that time, students are now forced to take English at school. However, the most of Indonesian schools still underestimate the importance of English as an international language. Since teaching a foreign language has many different features. A teacher besides teaches and evaluates students' language abilities, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, but they need to assists, facilitates, and encourages students to have enthusiasm, a positive attitude, and motivation to gain

English. Also, teachers have to understand what students learn, how and why this learning influence them, and how lessons could help them in the future.

Moreover, HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) refer to cognitive processes that go beyond the memorization and recall of information. As mentioned by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) HOTS are divided into three levels. The three highest cognitive levels are analyzing (C4), evaluating (C5), and creating (C6) which enable students to think critically, solve problems, and make informed decisions. The integration of HOTS into TEFL is seen as a promising approach to develop learners' communicative competence, promote a deeper understanding of English, and equip them with lifelong learning skills. To complete learning task, students need to be taught HOTS developed through a variety of teaching method or approach.

HOTS and 21st century skills are two concepts that are closely related in the field of education. HOTS refer to a set of cognitive skills that involve analysis, evaluation, and innovation to create something new, while 21st century skills refer to a set of skills that are considered essential for success in the modern world, including communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. The development of HOTS is considered essential for the development of 21st century skills, as it requires students to engage in complex and creative thinking processes that are necessary for success in the modern world. HOTS are not just about memorizing facts or solving simple problems but are about developing the ability to think critically, analyse complex information, synthesize new ideas, evaluate evidence, and create innovative solutions to real-world problems.

And now we are in the 21st century, learning is also increasing. In considering the importance of HOTS in education, the new Indonesian curriculum is created to fulfil the requirements for students' ability to think. In 2016 the government have included HOTS in national examination which use 2013 Curriculum. One of the key features of 2013 Curriculum is its emphasis on the development of 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and communication skill. The curriculum is designed to involved student more to take a part actively in teaching-learning activity through various learning method. Furthermore, 2013 Curriculum emphasizes the importance of character education, with a focus on developing students' moral values, social awareness, and leadership skills. This is intended to help students become responsible and productive citizens, who can contribute to the development of their communities and the nation as a whole.

However, many teachers did not implemented HOTS in English learning activity. For instance, during the internship program at the one of junior high school, the writer found that some teachers did not implement HOTS. The teachers have not been able to compile and develop HOTS-based questions in the learning process. Multiple-choice questions are still often used to facilitate the student learning assessment process even though multiple-choice questions tend to be unable to hone students' higher-order thinking skills. The use of questions to find out LOTS tends to be more dominant than questions with HOTS. The results showed that more than 50% of the questions which are written in the student's test have not measured student's HOTS.

The writer knows those result by review the questions are written in the student's test. Even though the questions related to the materials that have been delivered to students, there is no comparison difficulty level on those tests. Mostly the questions had low difficulty level. Many teachers also assume multiple-choice type question are often used to facilitate the student learning assessment process to make assessment easier than other question type. Even though multiple-choice questions tend to be unable to hone students' higher-order thinking skills which only use abilities that are limited to routine matters, for instance students memorize and repeat previously known information. This ability is closely related to the learning process which is mostly done by remembering, understanding, and applying. As a result, most students struggle to solve problems that require HOTS.

In 2021 Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture proposed a new curriculum called *Merdeka* Curriculum. The aim of this curriculum is to promote independence and autonomy in learning among Indonesian students and based on a student-centred approach, which emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and creativity. The curriculum is designed to provide students with more autonomy and flexibility in choosing their learning paths and topics of study, rather than being dictated by a fixed set of subjects and learning materials. One of the key features of the *Merdeka* Curriculum is the integration of technology and digital media into the learning process. This is intended to provide students with access to a wider range of learning resources, as well as to develop their digital literacy skills, which are increasingly important in the modern world.

However, there has been some criticism of the *Merdeka* Curriculum, particularly regarding its feasibility and the level of support that was be required to implement such a significant change in the educational system. Some have also raised concerns about the potential impact on teachers, who may need to adapt to new teaching methods and technologies. Both 2013 Curriculum and *Merdeka* Curriculum contains HOTS as well as 21st century skill which need be mastered by students. In this case, teachers should have enough understanding and application of HOTS on teaching process. Teachers should be able to create and use HOTS along with the subject matter during the teaching and learning process (Sutarto, 2017).

In order to develop both HOTS and 21st century skills, teachers need to focus on creating learning environments that promote critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and innovation. This may involve the use of project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and other student-centred approaches that emphasize problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration. The development of HOTS and 21st century skills is essential for the success of students in the modern world. By promoting critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and innovation, educators can help prepare students for the complex and rapidly changing world and help them become successful learners and contributors to society.

The integration of technology and digital media into the learning process can help promote the development of both HOTS and 21st century skills, as it provides students with access to a wealth of information and resources, as well as opportunities for collaboration and communication with others around the world.

However, despite the potential benefits of HOTS, teachers may face several challenges when trying to implement them in TEFL. These challenges may arise from various sources, including a lack of understanding of HOTS, insufficient training, inadequate resources, and cultural differences in the classroom (Aisyah, 2017).

Therefore, this study aims to identify the English teachers' perceptions about the implementation of HOTS in EFL classroom and to identify specific challenges that English teachers' face in implementing HOTS in EFL classroom. The findings of this study were providing insights into the factors that hinder the implementations HOTS in EFL classroom and may offer suggestions for addressing the challenges when implementing HOTS in EFL classroom.

1.2 Problem Statement

The problem of the present study is formulated as follows:

1. What are the challenges that English teachers faced in implementing HOTS in EFL classroom?
2. What are the English teachers' perceptions about the implementation of HOTS in EFL classroom?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to identify specific challenges that English teachers faced in implementing HOTS in EFL classroom along with to identify the English teachers' perceptions about the implementation of HOTS in EFL classroom.

1.4 Limitation of the Study

This study was conducted at UPT SMPN 3 Wlingi which located at Jl. Merdeka Number. 2 Balerejo, Blitar Regency. This study also only focused on the English teachers' perceptions about the implementation of HOTS in EFL classroom and the challenges that they faced in implementing HOTS in EFL classroom. There were three English teachers at UPT SMPN 3 Wlingi who served as primary data sources and they were the respondents of the interviews that were conducted before class observations. They answered 10 questions related to the objectives of the study. The class observations were conducted 4 times in 2 weeks of the study. Alongside the interviews and class observations, the researcher used the lesson plan created by English teachers as a complement in collecting data that was useful for the research results. The instruments used in this study were 10 interview questions and class observation guideline. This research worked with qualitative data as the result of the interviews and class observations. The findings of this study were analysed using an interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, namely data condensation and data display. The researcher also used additional analysis approaches that included open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

1.5 Operational Definition of the Key Terms

There are some key terms that was frequently be mentioned in this study:

1. HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skill) is characterized as the thinking skills of analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Hadi. et al, 2018).

2. TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) is defined as the teaching of the English language to non-native speakers in a country where English is the second language.
3. 2013 Curriculum is curriculum has been implemented as the national curriculum since 2013/2014 school year period.
4. Merdeka Curriculum refers to the recent education reform initiative in Indonesia called *Merdeka Belajar*.
5. Teaching Method are the general strategies used to assist students in achieving learning outcomes (Nilson, 2022).