

ANALYSIS OF READING EXERCISES IN THE ENGLISH ON TARGET TEXTBOOK FOR GRADE XI SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research will look at the reading comprehension activities in Erlangga's *English on Target* textbook for Grade XI Senior High School students. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study investigated all reading passages and related exercises from eight chapters to determine the reading comprehension abilities addressed and the sorts of exercises performed. The research reveals that the textbook incorporates six major reading skills: identifying primary concepts, locating specific material, interpreting terminology in context, drawing conclusions, determining authorial purpose, and recognizing text organization. Literal comprehension dominates the early chapters, whereas inferential and evaluative skills become increasingly common in later units, indicating a shift toward higher-order thinking. Five exercise formats were discovered, with multiple-choice questions accounting for the most, followed by vocabulary-based items, true/false and matching tasks, open-ended responses, and reading activities that use grammar. Although the textbook makes an effort to guide students from basic to advanced comprehension, literal questions are more common than analytical ones. These findings suggest that, while the textbook promotes core reading skills, teachers may need to augment it with additional inferential and evaluative tasks to meet curriculum goals related to higher-order literacy. The study admits its constraint of focusing on a particular textbook and suggests future research that includes classroom implementation and comparative studies to improve understanding of textbook effectiveness in Indonesian EFL environments.

Keywords : Reading Comprehension; Textbook Analysis; English on Target; Reading Exercises; EFL Literacy.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is often regarded as an essential component of second and foreign language learning because it allows students to interpret written language, develop their vocabulary, and generate meaning from many types of discourse (Samaraweera, 2023). In Indonesian senior high schools, the 2013 Curriculum emphasizes reading as a key literacy skill, encouraging pupils to examine material critically rather than just identifying explicit features. This curricular emphasis highlights the need for instructional resources that promote deeper comprehension and students' ability to engage with texts meaningfully. As a result, English reading activities in schools must go beyond literal interpretation, encouraging students to analyze ideas, assess material, and develop conceptual comprehension (Rochman, 2017).

Within this curriculum framework, English textbooks are the key instructional materials that help teachers and students achieve their learning objectives. Textbooks are the primary instructional materials in many Indonesian classrooms, determining the quality of language input and the cognitive processes necessary in reading activities. A well-designed textbook should include meaningful texts, cultural awareness, and critical literacy

components that assist students develop both language skills and cognitive processes. As a result, reviewing English textbooks, particularly their reading exercises, is critical in identifying whether they meet national educational standards and achieve the desired learning outcomes (Hidayah et al., 2021).

Despite the curriculum's emphasis on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), multiple studies have found that many Indonesian EFL textbooks continue to prioritize literal comprehension. Textbooks frequently provide reading activities that are primarily concerned with recognizing explicit material while ignoring inferential and evaluative questions necessary for developing analytical reasoning. This mismatch creates a disconnect between curricular goals and classroom realities, restricting students' ability to grasp deeper meanings or critically evaluate material offered in texts. As a result, reading activities may not help pupils graduate to higher literacy abilities (Manalu & Harahap, 2025).

This issue has constantly been highlighted in research on Indonesian senior high school textbooks. According to the findings, reading comprehension exercises are more likely to include recall or factual questions than inferential or analytical activities. Although the textbooks expose students to a variety of text genres, the activities frequently do not engage students in higher-level cognitive processes, leaving them with few opportunity to build the interpretative or evaluative skills required for reading mastery. This disparity shows that existing materials should be reassessed to ensure that they truly assist deeper comprehension in line with curriculum goals (Ariawan & Kholidi, 2023).

Additional research shows that many textbooks used in Indonesian schools rely primarily on Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS), with HOTS-based items appearing inconsistently throughout the chapters. Some units feature inferential or evaluative questions, while others are limited to basic recognition or vocabulary identification. This inconsistency undermines the systematic development of pupils' reading abilities since they are not gradually exposed to increasingly difficult cognitive demands. These findings emphasize the importance of more systematic and coherent integration of HOTS across textbook units to enable balanced literacy development (Maryamah et al., 2024).

The difficulty of incorporating higher-level comprehension abilities into textbook design is not limited to Indonesia. Research conducted in various EFL contexts, particularly in Southeast Asia, has revealed similar constraints in reading material development. Although textbooks frequently contain diverse and entertaining materials, the reading exercises that accompany them tend to emphasize literal understanding. Inferential and evaluative questions are rare, indicating that the problem of insufficient cognitive depth in reading materials persists across many educational systems. These findings show that enhancing the cognitive aspects of reading workouts is a global need rather than a national one (Fadillah et al., 2024; Laila, 2020).

Erlangga remains a major English textbook publisher in Indonesia, and its series English on Target is widely used in senior high schools. The book, which is designed to fit with the 2013 Curriculum, includes descriptive, recount, exposition, procedure, and explanation texts that are intended to help students' linguistic and cognitive development. However, empirical information evaluating the cognitive quality of its reading exercises is scarce, highlighting the need for a thorough review. As a result, the current study undertakes a thorough chapter-by-chapter evaluation of the English reading activities on Target to establish (1) which reading comprehension abilities are addressed and (2) what types of reading comprehension exercises are offered. The findings are likely to provide insights for educators and material makers on improving HOTS-oriented reading instruction and

boosting literacy development in Indonesian high schools (Zainil & Fitrawati, 2020).

METHODS

This study followed a descriptive qualitative research design with textual analysis as the primary approach. The qualitative technique was used since the data were non-numerical and necessitated an interpretive assessment of language and pedagogical components rather than statistical measurement (Mardiyana et al., 2023). All eight English on Target lessons were assessed to determine the relationship between reading comprehension questions and the abilities they were designed to teach. Each reading passage and its accompanying exercises were evaluated based on question kinds, cognitive demands, and alignment with Bloom's Revised Taxonomy principles, which stress the integration of higher-order thinking skills (Irawan & Diptoadi, 2022). Data were gathered by document analysis, which included reading, coding, and categorizing each item according to the comprehension skill it targeted. The study included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drafting to ensure that the findings accurately reflected contextual understanding and pedagogical depth. This strategy enabled the researcher to assess the coherence, instructional value, and cognitive quality of the reading tasks without requiring external intervention.

The textbook English on Target for Grade XI SMA/MA, produced by (Sarwoko, 2017), was chosen for this study because it is widely used in Indonesian classrooms and aligns with the 2013 curriculum. The book uses a number of text genres, including descriptive, narrative, explanation, and analytical exposition, to reflect communicative and contextual learning principles. Document analysis allowed the researcher to investigate the educational aim and language patterns embedded in the reading activities, while the textbook served as the major study tool. To ensure validity, coding processes were repeated and rigorously compared throughout the analysis (Desyantaningsih & Artini, 2022). The interpretive step linked emergent patterns to reading comprehension theories, task design, and curriculum implementation, allowing the researcher to determine how well the textbook promotes inferential and critical reading skills. The study's interpretive approach shows the benefits and limits of English on Target as an EFL learning resource and provides insights for teachers and material developers to improve future textbook design (Vitta, 2021).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of reading comprehension tasks in English on Target shows a systematic integration of reading skills spread over all eight chapters of the textbook. Through qualitative textual assessment, 115 reading comprehension questions were identified, each providing a specific cognitive function aligned with the 2013 Curriculum requirements. The findings indicate that the book integrates six major reading comprehension skills: identifying primary concepts, discovering specific information, interpreting terminology in context, drawing inferences, determining authorial purpose, and recognizing text organization. These skills evolved at varied intervals, demonstrating an educational development from lower-order to higher-order cognition. For example, the early chapters are dominated by queries about factual information and the core theme, whereas inference and Evaluative exercises become more common in subsequent chapters, reflecting the author's attempt to guide pupils to deeper comprehension. Such structuring is consistent with the view of reading as a multi-level cognitive process requiring both literal comprehension and analytical participation (Junaidi et al., 2024).

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Table 1. Reading Comprehension Skills in the *English on Target* Textbook

No	Reading Skill	Description	Cognitive Level	Frequency
1	Identifying Main Idea	Recognizing the central topic or thesis of a text	Understanding	20
2	Finding Specific Information	Locating explicit details and factual data	Remembering	24
3	Understanding Vocabulary in Context	Determining the meaning of underlined or unfamiliar words	Applying	18
4	Making Inference	Drawing implicit conclusions from textual evidence	Analyzing	22
5	Identifying Purpose	Understanding the communicative goal of a passage	Evaluating	16
6	Recognizing Text Organization	Analyzing generic structure and logical sequence	Analyzing	15

A closer look at the distribution patterns reveals that locating specific information is the most commonly graded talent, appearing 24 times, outperforming other skills like interpreting terminology in context (18 occurrences) and identifying the primary idea (20 occurrences). Meanwhile, inferential reasoning appears 22 times, showing a strong focus on analytical comprehension. Identifying authorial goal (16 occurrences) and recognizing text organization (15 occurrences) are less common, but their inclusion demonstrates the book's intention to encourage comprehension beyond surface-level details. This unequal but progressive distribution follows a general pattern found in many EFL textbooks, in which literal comprehension dominates early sections before gradually changing to higher-order thinking. This pattern is consistent with earlier research showing that EFL textbooks frequently begin by strengthening foundational comprehension before introducing students to more cognitively challenging problems, ensuring language preparation before conceptual complexity (Shabrina et al., 2025).

Table 2. Types of Reading Exercises in the *English on Target* Textbook

No	Type of Exercises	Description	Skill Targeted	Frequency
1	Multiple choice comprehension	Selecting the correct answer based on passage	Main idea, detail, inference	62
2	Vocabulary based item	Identifying meaning, synonym or antonym of target words	Vocabulary in context	18
3	True/False and Matching	Determining accuracy of statements or matching ideas	Detail comprehension	12
4	Open-ended short answer	Responding to inferential or opinion based questions	Inference, evaluation	14
5	Grammar integrated reading	Using reading texts to strengthen structural understanding	Form and function recognition	9

The examination of workout types reveals a similarly structured pattern. The textbook has five basic types of reading exercises: multiple-choice comprehension, vocabulary-based items, true/false and matching problems, open-ended short-answer questions, and grammar-integrated reading. Multiple-choice items make up 62 of the 115 questions, making them the most common format. This popularity is predictable given that multiple-choice questions enable teachers to easily assess comprehension of main ideas, details, vocabulary, and inference across various text formats. Vocabulary-based questions account for 18 items and serve to teach lexical awareness in context, which is an important ability for EFL learners. True/False and matching questions (12 items) focus on literal understanding, but open-ended inferential questions (14 items) encourage students to create reasoning and produce evidence-based answers. Grammar-integrated reading assignments, mostly seen in Chapters 5 and 8, demonstrate an intentional endeavor to connect structural understanding with textual meaning. These findings highlight the textbook's balanced approach to testing both form- and meaning-focused skills, which is an important aspect of reading teaching (Yathip & Chanyoo, 2022).

The textual evidence from each chapter supports the conclusion that, while literal comprehension dominates the textbook statistically, inferential and evaluative reasoning are purposefully incorporated in contextually rich topics. Chapter 4 (Smoking), for example, has health-related sections that require students to assess the author's stance on smoking and evaluate ethical implications. Meanwhile, Chapter 6 (Disaster Preparedness) contains texts about safety and community awareness, provoking queries like "Why should we store emergency supplies?" that necessitate contextual application of learning. These contextually grounded questions link reading to real-world scenarios, which is an important premise in communicative language education and an effective method for increasing student engagement and comprehension depth (Sun et al, 2024).

Another significant discovery is the inclusion of grammar-integrated reading exercises, particularly in Chapters 5 (Passive Voice) and 8 (Reported Speech). Although these chapters largely focus on structural accuracy, the reading sections still require semantic processing to interpret meaning. Items like "The car is repaired by the mechanic" need pupils to understand both grammatical roles and semantic linkages at the same time (Yu & Li, 2022). This connection supports the concept of comprehension and grammar as interdependent rather than independent parts of language learning. The ability to perceive grammatical structures in meaningful context improves reading fluency and syntactic awareness, both of which are required for higher-level comprehension.

When compared to past textbook assessments in Indonesia, the current findings both support and expand on earlier observations. Several studies have found that Indonesian EFL textbooks focus primarily on Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) while inconsistently include Higher Order Thinking Skills. (Rahmi & Ahsani, 2024) discovered that many textbooks continue to emphasize factual recollection over inferential reasoning. However, the current research demonstrates that English on Target incorporates higher-order activities more carefully than many previous-generation textbooks. Chapters on social and environmental issues such as smoking, cheating, plastic waste, and disaster planning raise analytical and evaluative challenges that go beyond literal comprehension. This suggests that textbooks issued throughout recent curriculum eras are gradually becoming more aligned with HOTS-oriented mandates.

This result is consistent with previous research by (Maryamah et al., 2024), who discovered that reading comprehension problems in Indonesian senior high school textbooks

tend to stress lower-order thinking skills over inferential or evaluative reasoning. However, the current study is unique in its methodological complexity, as it evaluates the English on Target textbook chapter by chapter and contains actual textual samples to demonstrate how each exercise corresponds to distinct reading sub-skills. This allows for a more detailed assessment of how the textbook promotes or fails to assist students' cognitive growth across various sorts of texts. Furthermore, the current analysis expands on previous research by categorizing all question types found in the book, providing a clearer picture of the distribution of literal, inferential, and evaluative tasks, which is critical for assessing the alignment of ELT textbooks with the 2013 Curriculum's emphasis on higher order literacy (Harahap & Natsir, 2021).

This study is unique in that it provides a full chapter-by-chapter analysis, allowing for a thorough knowledge of how reading skills and exercise kinds are dispersed throughout the textbook. By reviewing all chapters rather than just a few, this study provides a more complete picture of the textbook's cognitive and pedagogical design. This methodology also allows for the identification of subtle progressions, such as the transition from literal to inferential reasoning and the incorporation of thematic relevance in reading passages. Such a deep and comprehensive approach adds value to ELT research by providing nuanced insights that can influence future textbook evaluation studies and classroom instructional decision-making (Soe, 2024).

The research findings have practical implications for instructors and curriculum implementers. The prevalence of literal comprehension questions shows that teachers may need to complement the textbook with more inferential, critical, and creative reading tasks to guarantee a well-rounded literacy experience. While English on Target provides a solid basis for comprehension development, the textbook's minimal use of evaluative questions suggests that it may not fully achieve the curriculum's HOTS-oriented learning outcomes. Teachers can improve classroom practice by incorporating identified strengths such as contextual relevance and planned progression, as well as providing extension activities that foster higher-order reasoning, such as debates, text comparisons, and critical reflection assignments (Aynalem & Tesmand, 2023).

Finally, this study indicates that, while English on Target outperforms previous textbooks in terms of cognitive variety and thematic relevance, significant shortcomings persist (Hanifa, 2018). The scarcity of text-structure problems, as well as the unequal distribution of evaluative tasks, suggest that future editions can be improved. Furthermore, the use of multiple-choice items may limit opportunities for open-ended investigation, emphasizing the need for more communicative and process-oriented reading activities. Nonetheless, the textbook's general design, which incorporates linguistic, cognitive, and thematic components, reveals a concerted effort to conform with curricular standards and promote reading development in Indonesian high schools (Sukmawijaya et al., 2020). These findings have important implications for teachers, material makers, and future academics looking to improve EFL reading teaching and textbook design.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to analyze the reading comprehension exercises contained in the *English on Target* textbook published by Erlangga for Grade XI Senior High School students, focusing on identifying the types of reading comprehension skills required and the variety of exercise formats presented across its chapters. Through descriptive qualitative textual analysis of all reading passages and tasks in Chapters 1 to 8 including descriptive

texts, expository passages, letters, procedural texts, grammar-related reading items, and interpretive comprehension questions the research evaluated the alignment between the textbook's design and the goals of the 2013 Curriculum, particularly its emphasis on literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension. The findings indicate that while literal comprehension dominates the early chapters, especially in functional and descriptive text units, inferential and evaluative comprehension become more emphasized in the later chapters as students are guided to interpret arguments, recognize viewpoints, evaluate meanings, and connect textual messages to broader real-world contexts. Additionally, the textbook supports learners' understanding of text structure, communicative purpose, and syntactic patterns through grammar-integrated reading tasks found in units such as Passive Voice and Reported Speech. Five major types of reading exercises were identified: multiple-choice items, vocabulary-focused questions, true/false and matching tasks, open-ended comprehension questions, and grammar-integrated reading activities. Multiple-choice items constitute the majority, offering efficient assessment across cognitive levels, whereas open-ended and inferential questions in later chapters promote deeper engagement and higher-order thinking. Grammar-based reading questions further illustrate the interrelatedness between syntactic knowledge and meaning construction.

The results carry important implications for teachers, textbook developers, and policymakers. For teachers, *English on Target* can be used not only for comprehension assessment but also as a basis for critical discussions and reflective tasks, although enrichment may be necessary in chapters dominated by literal comprehension. Textbook writers are encouraged to create a more balanced distribution of cognitive demands by strengthening inferential and evaluative components, while policymakers can view this textbook as a step toward better alignment with curriculum standards, although further refinement remains essential. Recommendations include supplementing literal comprehension sections with inferential and evaluative questions, incorporating more authentic texts to broaden linguistic exposure, integrating reflective or project-based tasks for deeper engagement, and maintaining the inclusion of real-world issues that enhance relevance and meaningfulness. Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its focus on a single textbook and the absence of teacher or student perspectives; thus, future research should involve comparative textbook analyses, classroom-based investigations, or studies exploring teachers' and learners' perceptions to more comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of reading comprehension exercises in Indonesian EFL contexts.

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