

## ENHANCING STUDENTS' HIGHER ORDER THINKING SKILL THROUGH GUIDING QUESTION TECHNIQUE

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of the guiding question technique in enhancing students' Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) at a senior high school in Cianjur. It employed a quantitative approach with an experimental design, using pre- and post-tests to assess HOTS development. The findings revealed that in the control class, the mean HOTS score before treatment was 61.88, which increased to 74.00 after applying the conventional method. The significance value for the HOTS assessment variable in this group was 0.840. Meanwhile, in the experimental class, the mean HOTS score before treatment was 61.38, rising to 88.62 after implementing the guiding question technique. The post-test HOTS assessment in this group showed a significance value of 0.000. The t-test results confirmed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups, indicating that students in the experimental class achieved a higher improvement in HOTS compared to those in the control class. These results establish that the guiding question technique is an effective method for enhancing students' higher-order thinking skills.

**Keywords:** Guiding question technique, Enhancing, Higher order thinking

### INTRODUCTION

People all across the world have relied more on English language during the past few decades as a result of globalization (Abdalgane, 2022). Along with its development, this language has been used globally and by most of the people in the

world. Therefore, it is undeniable that English plays an important role in every aspect of life including education. To answer this challenge, the importance of teaching English has increased. It is now one of the courses that must be taught for three years in junior high schools and three



years in senior high schools, the objective of which to attain native-like proficiency (Thalal, 2010; Launder, 2008). The government's decision to set English as one of the subjects at various levels of education is very reasonable to prepare the Indonesian generation to be able to compete globally.

The main goal of learning English is to improve the ability to apply six language skills of speaking, listening, reading, watching, writing, and presenting in a variety of texts. Writing as one of productive skill in English has a vital role that contributes to students' academic success (Irzawati, 2021). It is crucial and offers the students the opportunity to simultaneously catch on many vital facilities that can help them succeed in their academics, career, and also in other relevant aspects of their lives (Harmer; 2004). Writing helps students to reinforce the grammatical structure, idiom, and vocabulary, it makes them involved with a new language as the effort to express ideas (Raimes, 2000). All of the statements remarkably state the importance of writing skill for students since it is outstandingly able to increase students' communication skill. However, the students have to master those six skills through variety of techniques that can help them such as using SQ3R to teach reading (Kohar et al., 2022), guiding question techniques to teach writing (Namasivayam, Singh, Mustafa, Mohtar, 2017) and others.

Seeing English learning materials in *Merdeka* curriculum, English as a foreign language is used primarily as an object of study. English appears to be a must for success at the secondary school through tertiary levels. Studying English as part of the national curriculum gives students the chance to gain new perspectives on their own identities, social interactions, cultural

norms, and employment opportunities that are available worldwide (Kemendikbud, 2021). Moreover, the ability to use English as a foreign language will open doors for Indonesians to participate in a global society and will also give them a means of absorbing or sharing knowledge that is being developed in Indonesia (Efriza, 2022). So that, students should have the higher order thinking skill since it is crucial aspect to live in this era ((Collins, 2014; Apriani, 2019). Moreover, it one of the students' abilities that should be developed through teaching and learning. Unfortunately, teacher teachers' knowledge about HOTS, their ability to improve students' HOTS, solving HOTS-based problems, and measuring students' HOTS are still low (Retnawati et al., 2018). Based on that, the problem of HOTS should be solved.

In the other hand, the teacher can use the guiding question since it can help developing writing topic. By asking questions, students are encouraged to think and use prior knowledge to better understand the most recent learning materials. Questions, according to Dillon (1988) in Shen and Yodkhumlue (2011) are the most effective form of effective teaching since they may activate students' learning and thinking while also assisting teachers in recognizing their students' learning strategies. This technique would be able stimulate thought and creativity of students in expressing their feelings and opinions in writing besides changing the students' perception of writing as well (Namasivayam, Singh, Mustafa, Mohtar, 2017). While Rafika (2014) declared that students can use questioning to help them organize and flow their topic or ideas. Unfortunately, the HOTS implementation of learning cannot be directly taught to

students. Students should be trained about HOTS, as a skill, through learning activities that support its development. Active learning and student-centered learning are activities for training about HOTS (Retnawati et al., 2018).

Besides, guiding Question technique on many occasions will guide students to think at a high level in exploring his/her idea by giving some questions related to the topic and it can be a way to help students in exploring topic in writing skill (Mayer, 2005). Guiding question technique can improve students' writing skill in the term of content and organization aspect (Desti Sri Wahyuni et al., 2024). Guiding question technique helps students to generate and organize their ideas. Furthermore, it is able to boost student's motivation and confidence in writing lessons (Namasivayam, Singh, Mustafa, Mohtar, 2017).

HOTS needs to be implemented to face education in the Industry Revolution 4.0. It aims at developing students' competence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century which consisted of three main components in thinking, doing and living in the world (Esen, 2021). Every student is demanded to possess those three main components particularly thinking skill that is severely crucial to students' achievement in today's world. It is in line with the statement of Moon (2008) that a willingness to be critical thinker is important. Moreover, Elder and Paul (2013) argued that someone's thinker reflects human quality of life. Thus, the core problem in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is HOTS (Craig, 2011).

Nevertheless, incorporating HOTS into learning process still has a long way to go. The majority of the challenges and issues appear to emerge from the teacher,

students, and learning process. Several study findings (Tyas, Nurkamto, and Laksani, 2019) show that teachers still encounter challenges while implementing HOTS learning, such as how to create test items, how to integrate technology, and how to assess HOTS students. Other than the teachers' condition, the students' abilities were highlighted, it was found that the students were not prepared to respond to HOTS questions. Most of teachers felt it was hard to apply HOTS in the classroom with various students' learning abilities and motivation. While, in the learning process, the availability of book which dealt with the implementation of HOTS was still limited.

Analytical exposition text is one type of learning material that the researcher found intriguing and decided to examine. Analytical exposition requires the writer to expound on his or her thoughts on a certain topic in order to persuade the reader to share the writer's perspective or perception (Knapp and Watkin, 2005). In this case, the writer is not simply expressing his or her beliefs, he or she is also attempting to convey those perceptions as reasoning. They must examine their own beliefs and perceptions on a given topic in order to persuade the reader to believe in mutual understanding.

To write an analytical exposition, students must improve their thinking and reasoning skills, which include comparing and contrasting data, categorizing data, inferring data, and making decisions. Therefore, the writer needs to go through various steps, including identifying, connecting, elaborating, and assessing the concepts in a piece of writing to develop critical writing skills. Students require higher order thinking skills to break down their ideas, such as processing for gathering

information, making judgments, and then developing material to provide a clear and plausible argument and evidence to the reader, in order to create critical writing.

The significance of High Order Thinking skill in writing analytical exposition is that students will learn how to analyze, make synthesis, evaluate, develop language, and take decision. All of which are connected to writing analytical exposition. In order to create this form of text, students must possess high order thinking skill particularly to arrange accurate arguments and gain the reader trust on the writer's arguments (Mustika et.al., 2019).

The potential of guiding questions to improve Higher Order Thinking Skill and writing skill have been proven from several studies. The variety of questions the teachers asked in the classroom cultivate the students' critical thinking (Mustika, Nurkamto, and Azizah 2020). Moreover, Singh, Singh, Singh, Mostafa, and Mohtar (2018) analyzed the issue of HOTS usage to teach writing and concluded that there were some ways to encourage HOTS among students, some of the ways is through questioning. All of the statements are in line with Silalahi, Sihombing, Herman, and Purba (2021) who indicated that the application of HOTS question in teaching writing give good contribution in EFL learners' writing ability. Teacher can use HOTS questions to solve students' difficulties in writing since HOTS question can help learners to encourage background knowledge.

As a result of the foregoing reality, the researcher sees an opportunity and a gap to move away from the position and condition. Moreover, based on the informal interview with the English teacher of SMAN 2 Cianjur, The teacher found that the student

seems difficult in addressing some arguments. One of the factors that influence this condition is the way of student's thinking. Students seem difficult to analyze, evaluate, and create a new concept of an issue. Therefore, they need to be trained to think in higher order thinking skill in order they are able to address and elaborate his/her arguments.

Guiding question can be implemented to improve students' HOTS. Very few studies have attempted to elaborate the implementation of HOTS questions in teaching writing. HOTS question is crucial since it is able to equip students in delivering some arguments that aims to convince the reader or listener that something should or should not be the case. Therefore, the researcher will observe the effectiveness of guiding question technique to improve student's higher order thinking skill at the eleventh grade students of SMAN 2 Cianjur.

## METHOD

The research employed a quantitative approach since it would be based on computation and measurement, operational variables and statistics. It was in line with what Creswell (2015) stated that quantitative research is a type of educational research in which researchers decide what to study; ask specific; narrow questions; collect quantifiable data from participants; analyze these numbers using statistics; and conduct the inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner. Experimental design would be applied in this research to recognize possible cause and effect among variables. In experimental design, the researcher tested an idea to determine whether it influenced an outcome or dependent variable (Creswell, 2015). Thus, it would focus on whether the

implementation of guiding question would cause the improvement of Higher Order Thinking Skill.

In order to grasp comprehensive understanding about the implementation of guiding question technique to improve higher order thinking Skill, the researcher employed quasi-experimental design. One group would be designed as the experimental group and one other as the control group. The operation of research would utilize pre-test-post-test design.

The population of the research was eleventh graders of SMAN2 Cianjur. There were 12 classes with a total number 418 students, each class has varied students about 34 to 36 students.

The next step was choosing a sample of the research. A sample is a group in research study in which information was obtained (Fraenkel, 2016). Therefore, the research obtained the information from two classes. They were taken to be the control class and the experimental class. Each class consist of 36 students. Both classes will be examined after and before the implementation of conventional and guiding question technique for six meetings in each group.

To determine the sample of research, this study would utilize purposive sampling technique. According to Sugiyono (2015) Purposive sampling is the technique to determine the sample by applying certain criteria. Eleventh graders of F and K were taken as sampling criteria since they have the lowest score.

The instrument used pre and post-test of higher order thinking skill. The purpose of the pre and post-test of higher order thinking skill was to measure students' higher order thinking skill before and after implementing guiding question technique

in teaching writing.

The students would be tested to answer HOTS questions. HOTS questions were categorized based on the way of how analyze, evaluate, and create. Each category is broken down into sub-categories with their particular characteristics.

To measure the competence of students' higher order thinking skill, the scoring rubric would be applied to obtain the reliability of pre-test and post-test used and it will adapt scoring rubric of Brookhart (2010) to assess analyzing, evaluation and creation.

The data would be analyzed quantitatively which meant that the data was measured in numbers. After the data had been obtained, descriptive statistics were used to examine it. When the researcher had collected all of the data for this study, the data would be analyzed. Normal distribution test and Independent t-test would be used to analyze the output data to see whether there was a significant difference between the mean of the participants before and after conducting the treatment.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### **Descriptive Analysis Higher order thinking skill**

Higher order thinking skill is a variable of this research. This variable was measured through testing students' higher order thinking skill. The test used standard test of Brookhart's question (2010) to measure higher order thinking skill area of Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive domain which is revised by Anderson and Krathwhol (2001) that classified low order thinking skill to high-order thinking.

There are 3 valid questions provided for students to answer. There were two

classes that became the research samples and the test was conducted in one time in each class. The test was conducted during

an hour for each class. The scores were such as bellow:

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistic of HOTS Score

Descriptive	Control Class		Experimental Class	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
N	34	34	34	34
Minimum	50.00	50.00	50.00	67.00
Maximum	83.00	100.00	83.00	100.00
Std. Deviation	11.25	14.17	11.40	11.40
Mean	61.88	74.00	61.38	88.62

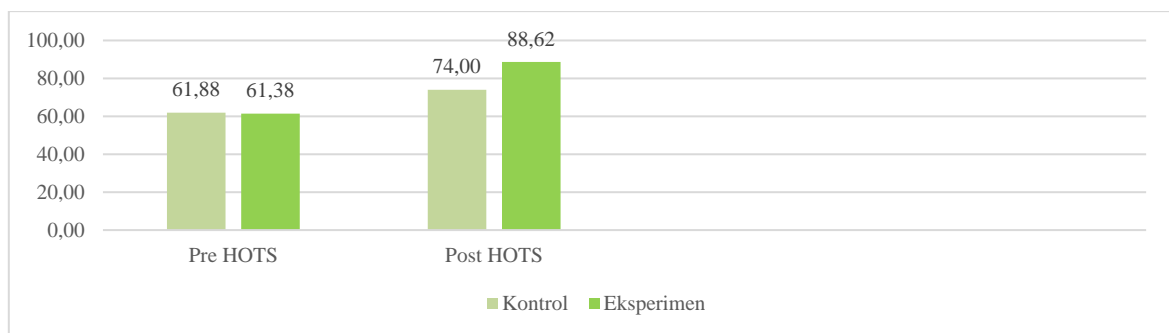
Source: Primary data processed

Based on the data in table 1, it found students' higher order thinking skill of control class and experiment class of the research. The data were taken from 72 students of population. The test consisted 3 questions while the ordinal form range of score is started from 0—3 that has been converted to scale 0—100. In the HOTS assessment of the control class, there was an increase from pre and post-test. The mean score before treatment in the control class was 61.88 and after the conventional method, the mean score of HOTS assessment was 74.00. This shows that there is an increase in student scores after

being treated with conventional learning techniques.

In the HOTS assessment of the experimental class, there was an increase from pre and post-test. The mean score before treatment in the experimental class was 61.38 and after the Guiding question technique method was implemented, the mean score of HOTS assessment was 88.62. This indicates that there is an increase in student scores after being treated with the Guiding question technique learning method as the following figure

**Figure 1:** Graphic of HOTS Assessment



Source: Primary data processed

Based on the descriptive results, the HOTS in the post test of the experimental

class who received the guiding question technique method provided high results compared to the conventional method.

### Assumption Test

The assumption test used in this study was the normality test. Data is normally distributed if the significance value of

Kolmogorov Smirnov is greater than 0.05. If the data is normally distributed, then testing the comparison hypothesis between the control and experimental groups uses an independent t test, but if it is not normally distributed, the Mann Whitney test is performed. The following was the result of the normality test in each treatment group:

Table 2. Normality Test Results of HOTS

Variable	Sig. Kolmorov Smirnov	Remarks
Pre HOTS Control	0.000	Not Normally Distributed
Post HOTS Control	0.000	Not Normally Distributed
Pre HOTS Experimental	0.000	Not Normally Distributed
Post HOTS Experimental	0.000	Not Normally Distributed

Source: Primary data processed

The results above obtained pre and post HOTS assessment data for the experimental and control classes, each of which had a significance value of 0.000 so that the data were not normally distributed. Because of that, the paired t-test used was the Mann Whitney method.

### Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis testing in this study was an unpaired t-test by comparing the mean in the control class with the experimental class. HOTS assessment was not normally distributed, so the paired t-test used was the Mann Whitney method. There was a significant difference if the significance value is smaller than 0.05.

Table 3. Differential Test Results of HOTS Variables

Variable	Mean	Mann Whitney Statistic	Sig.	Remarks
Pre HOTS Control	61.88		0.840	No
Pre HOTS Experimental	61.38	-0.202		difference
Post HOTS Control	74.00		0.000	There is a
Post HOTS Experimental	88.62	-4.074		difference

The Mann Whitney test aimed to compare the control class with the experimental class. In the pre-test, the HOTS assessment variable obtained a significance value of 0.840 so that there was no significant difference in HOTS assessment before the learning method was given between the control and experimental

groups. This was because both groups had not received the learning method.

In the post-test, the HOTS assessment variable obtained a significance value of 0.000, so that there was a significant difference in HOTS assessment after being given the learning method between the control and experimental

classes. Based on the descriptive results, the guiding question technique method in the experimental class was more effective in improving HOTS than the conventional method in the control class.

How effective is guiding question technique in enhancing students' higher order thinking skill?

This (RQ)1 was formulated in the following hypothesis:

H<sub>o</sub>.1: There will be not any verification of distinctive effectiveness in the eleventh grader students' higher order thinking skill reached through guiding question technique.

H<sub>i</sub>.1: There will be any verification of distinctive effectiveness in the eleventh grader students' higher order thinking skill reached through guiding question technique.

To examine both hypotheses, the result analysis of post-test of students' higher order thinking skill produced by both experimental and control class became the focus of the discussion. Its goal was to examine if the hypotheses had been accepted or rejected.

Based on the descriptive results, the guiding question technique in the experimental class was more effective in improving students' higher order thinking skill than the conventional technique in the control class. In the HOTS assessment of the control class, there was an increase from pre to post. The mean score before treatment in the control class was 61.88 and after the conventional method, the mean HOTS assessment was 74.00. This indicates that there was an increase in student scores after being treated with conventional learning technique.

In the HOTS assessment of the experimental class, there was an increase

from pre to post. The mean score before treatment in the experimental class was 61.38 and after the Guiding question technique method, the mean HOTS assessment was 88.62. This indicated that there was an increase in student scores after being treated with the guiding question technique.

There was a significant difference in the Higher Order Thinking Skill (HOTS) score after different learning methods given to the control and experimental class. In the post-test, the HOTS assessment variable obtained a significance value of 0.000, so that there was a significant difference in HOTS assessment after being given the learning technique between the control and experimental classes. In accordance with the result, the null hypothesis was rejected, and alternative hypothesis was accepted.

In short, it proved that implementing guiding question technique effectively enhanced students' higher order thinking skill. In essence, there was the significant difference between both classes on enhancing students' higher order thinking skill. Students' higher order thinking skill of experimental class was higher than control class.

One of the most common and prominent aspects in the classroom was the teacher's actions in asking questions to students. This was conducted to hone the way students' thinking regarding language skills. Teachers used varied cognitive level in delivering questions covering remembering, understanding, applying, evaluating and creating. Remembering dominated cognitive levels questions, even though it was unable to have a meaningful impact on the growth of critical thinking. However, they remained significant since they can help students advance to a more advance level of cognitive thinking (Mursyid and Kurniawati, 2019; Mustika, 2020; Apriani, 2019).



Some students may not be interested in producing a text for variety of reasons, including a fear of voicing their thoughts such as in composing argumentative text. However, integrating higher order thinking question helped students to use more reliable evidence, respond to competing viewpoints, support conclusions, and maintain the logical flow of ideas in their essays, although they did not achieve a mastery level, the average level they achieve was encouraging considering the limited training they received (Neimaouni, 2019, Gunawan, 2022).

The development of HOTS is one of the primary objectives of educational institutions, therefore it needs to be developed. It is to develop 21st century learners (Conklin, 2011) for both students and teachers (Heri et.al. 2018). One of the activities is by proposing and executing task based on high-level inquiries, which also referred to as higher order thinking questions. Addressing high-level questions encourage students to think critically about the subject, help them with memorization and semantic coding, and help them revisit and reconsider factual information that has been thought out in more intricate ways (Barnett and Francis, 2012; King, 2012).

According to Traver (1998) the Guiding Questions Technique is a basic question that leads to a search for understanding. As one of the techniques in teaching learning process, this technique is very useful to help students find the information they need to write. Teachers may employ question sequences as an instructional technique to help students become more proficient in writing a text. Nevertheless, teachers need to be aware of the questions that are asked in the classroom. It is imperative that the questions posed to students challenge their higher order thinking skills. It was essential to use HOTS questions

since they could assist students in developing their writing skills of analytical exposition (Sianturi, 2021).

the act of writing requires the presence cognitive processes such as thinking and reasoning. Hardianti, Jabu and Salija (2023) found that critical thinking as one of the part higher order thinking skills plays significant role in the writing process. The researchers observed that students were able to critically analyze their arguments, subsequently incorporating them into their written work. This ability to critically evaluate and synthesize information assisted students in drawing conclusions and addressing complex problems, thereby facilitating the identification of solutions and answers to contemporary issues. By incorporating higher order thinking skills into argumentative writing, students are better equipped to employ credible sources of information, address opposing views, strengthen conclusions, and maintain their essays' logical flow (Nejmaoui, 2019).

Higher order thinking skill is beneficial for students since it makes students easier to solve problems and find reliable information. Students who are more conscious of the importance of higher order thinking skill are also more logical thinkers and produce more critical and impactful writing. Srinawati and Alwi (2020) indicates that when higher order thinking skill are not taught in language classes causes students to perform less than the ones who receives higher order thinking skill training. As a result, it is now required that higher order thinking skill abilities be incorporated into writing classes particularly writing analytical exposition text.

## CONCLUSION

The finding of the current study decided that the experimental class' result quality of



student's higher order thinking skill was significantly improved since the t-test score decided that there was a significant difference between the experimental and control class, and the result quality of students' higher order thinking skill obtained by experimental class was higher than control class. It established that the guiding question technique effectively improved students' higher-order thinking skill.

It is suggested that English teacher should focus more on helping students build higher order thinking skill using a variety of strategies to make it easier for them to learn English. Besides that, other researchers might be interested in carrying out a study of the same kind, but they need know how to choose the tools that require higher order thinking skill.

Additionally, this finding will benefit for the policy maker in a number of ways, including (1) to discover and create a program or course to supplement or enhance English instruction in the schools that make up the research sample; (2) to ascertain the language skills students require; and (3) to determine an imbalance between what students need and what they can do. (4) to gather data regarding specific issues that arise during the teaching and learning process.

However, this study had some limitations because this study used two groups of sample and it was implemented at SMA degree for six meetings each group concerning with HOTS through the guiding question technique.

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