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An Analysis of the Reading Comprehension Questions in the Elementary Arabic Language Textbook in Algeria in Light of Barrett's Taxonomy

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Abstract:

This study aimed to analyze and classify the reading comprehension questions in the Arabic language Textbook prescribed for students in the third and fourth years of primary education in Algeria in light of Barrett's Taxonomy (1976). An analysis card was used that includes the levels of this classification, which are literal comprehension, reorganization, inferential, evaluation, and appreciation. The analysis was classified on the basis of their frequency and percentages, in order to identify the levels of reading comprehension targeted by the evaluation activities affiliated with the reading activity. The study relied on a descriptive-analytical approach based on content analysis technique. The result of this study indicated that the reading comprehension questions focus on the low level of reading comprehension questions (literal, reorganization, inferential) and give less weight to high level reading comprehension questions (evaluation, appreciation).

Key words: Reading comprehension activities, higher order thinking skill, Barrett's Taxonomy, question analysis, Elementary Arabic Language Textbook, Algeria.

Introduction

Reading comprehension, which has been defined as gaining an understanding of written text through a process of translating grapheme into meaning, is an important academic skill. Other language learning skills - writing, speaking and listening, all are connected to reading comprehension. (Barnwal, 2021)

Reading comprehension is a complex process involving the mastery and acquisition of several different skills (Carlisle, 2003) ,consider reading as a vital skill for autonomous learning. The main purpose of reading is to get information from the text

being read. In order to make this a success, the reader should be able to grasp the text correctly and to extract meaning from the text. For instance, writers use different techniques to convey meaning to readers. Furthermore, the process of getting the meaning is an activity that takes place between two parties, in order to get the message. In other words, readers have to use several comprehension skills to comprehend meaning from text (Aqeel & Farrah, 2019) , Because reading requires thinking, a reader must be cognitively awake and mentally alert if he or she wishes to read properly. In other words, reading is a mental process that entails assessing the content read and determining the author's and readers' goals in writing (Ekalia, Selamat, Jemadi, Jelimun, & Setiawan[5], 2022)

1. Literature Review

This section consists of two main parts. The first part presents the importance of reading comprehension questions in developing thinking skills. While the second part introduces previous studies related to Barrett's Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension.

1.1 Higher Order Thinking skill and Reading Comprehension Questions:

To train learners to practice the thinking skills, teachers can use questions in reading comprehension textbook. A textbook, according to Assaly & Igbaria (2014) is a vital source that offers the structure for activity to enhance students thought as well as activity; it not only transmits knowledge and information but also develops and supports HOTS (higher order thinking skill) processes. Based on what is commonly observed in the English lessons, questions are used to check students' comprehension of reading texts. (Assaly & Igbaria)

One of the ways in improving higher order thinking skill is by applying it in teaching learning process. As we know that classroom activity consists of three main elements, namely teachers, students, and textbooks. In this process, a teacher as a facilitator has a big portion to encourage students to operate their HOTSs. Teachers are suggested to give some HOTS questions for students directly or they can choose some tasks or activities from textbooks which provide HOTS questions. It can be concluded that a textbook should present valuable supplies of tasks and activities for both teachers and students. Furthermore, a textbook should be able to assist a teacher in producing questions in HOTS level which develop students' thinking. (Febrina, Usman, & Muslem, 2019)

An appropriate textbook which contains HOTS questions has an important role in encouraging students' critical thinking (Assaly & Igbaria). According to Merizka, Jufrizal (2020) the teacher should understand what level of question which are possible to support students in learning a target language. The students have to use their own perception, reaction, and feeling, value and life experiences as the key to answer the questions given. The way of knowing level of question are based on the

reason that certain sorts of questions will likely trigger the students to respond in more complex answers (Merizka & Jufrizal, 2020)

Besides the question that can improve language ability, it is beneficial to build background knowledge; it mediates the scope to which other reading comprehension behaviors are utilized. Thus, the questions should focus on the most essential of the content. Because students can find new information about their background of knowledge (Amalya, Anugerahwati, & Yaniafari, 2020)

Therefore, to support the reading comprehension questions should be organized based on the taxonomy. There are two well-known taxonomies in education, Bloom's taxonomy, and Barrett's taxonomy. The most highlight difference is Bloom Taxonomy can be implemented in all subjects according to the general function and designed items, which is to measure low-level skills versus higher-level skills; meanwhile, Barrett's Taxonomy is more specific (Marzano & kendall, 2007)

1.2 Barrett's Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension:

Thomas C. Barrett made this taxonomy in 1968; it is suitable for analyzing the reading comprehension question. There are some reasons for the use of Barrett's Taxonomy, as follows: to develop the instructional activities, identify the questions, and specify the reading comprehension instruction (Heilman, Blair, & Rupley, 1981) .Barrett's taxonomy of reading comprehension consists of five major categories, namely literal comprehension, reorganization, inferential comprehension, evaluation, and appreciation. It was designed originally to assist classroom teachers in developing comprehension questions and questions of test for reading (Surtantini, 2019)45, Literal reading comprehension concentrates on information and thoughts that are clearly identified in the text or the reading material. The reorganization type of comprehension is built on a accurate understanding of the text; learners should use information from diverse segments in the text and make connections between them for a better understanding. Comprehension questions of this type of are significant because they help learners to study the text as a whole, thus enabling them to have a global view (Day & Park, 2005) The inferential level is the process of going beyond the stated information to get deeper interpretation of textual information on the basis of the reader's background knowledge. It is mainly based on drawing inferences by trying to understand implicit information (Barrett, 1976), Inferential reading comprehension requires imagination and reading between the lines. Another comprehension type is evaluation, which refers to the learner's ability of reasoning and making judgments on certain ideas using certain criteria ,The last type of reading comprehension questions is appreciation (Aqeel & Farrah, 2019) it is called personal response which requires readers to respond emotionally (Day & Park, 2005).

1.3 Studies related to evaluating reading comprehension based on Barrett's Taxonomy :

One of the most important research studies that focused on analyzing reading comprehension questions in textbooks in light of Barrett's classification is a study presented by Farrah and Akeel (2020)Titled “Eighth Grade Textbook Reading Comprehension Questions and Barrett's Taxonomy: Teachers' Perspectives at Hebron District, Palestine.

The paper examines the perspectives of 8th grade English teachers towards the reading comprehension questions in the textbook and the extent to which these questions align with Barrett's Taxonomy. The study found that teachers had positive views towards the textbook overall, but the comprehension questions mainly focused on literal comprehension rather than higher-order thinking skills. The researchers recommended incorporating high-level comprehension questions based on Barrett's Taxonomy in the textbook (Aqeel & Farrah, 2019).

As for Candra’s (2014) study titled “The classification of reading comprehension questions in senior high School textbook entitled "English" using barrett's taxonomy” it concluded that the English textbook entitled "English" is not a good textbook because the reading comprehension questions did not cover all levels of questions as it focuses mainly on literal recognition level of questions which is relatively easy. To support the use for this book, it is suggested that English teachers prepare reading comprehension questions which cover evaluation and appreciation levels of questions.

While Akhir's (2021) study entitled “Barrett Taxonomy Reorganization To Improve Students' Intensive Reading Ability” it determine the effect of the Barrett Taxonomy Reorganization Method on the intensive reading ability of class VIII students of SMP Negeri 2 Duampanua, Pinrang Regency, 2019/2020 academic year. The results showed that the intensive reading ability using the Barrett Taxonomy Reorganization method was higher than the intensive reading ability using the conventional method for eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Duampanua, Pinrang Regency (Akhir & Marwiah, 2021).

As for Krismadayanti, Zainil study entitled “The level of the students reading comprehention analyzed by using Barrett taxonomy” it concluded that the students were categorized well in responding to questions in the form of appreciation level. This study also discovered that students have difficulties in answering questions from evaluation levels (Krismadayanti & Zainil, 2022).

2. Methodology and data

This study used a descriptive analytical approach based on content analysis techniques to investigate the extent to which the Arabic language textbook for the third and fourth grades of elementary education includes HOTS. The study aims to monitor this phenomenon and attempt to identify indicators of skill development throughout the academic year. The analysis focuses on the content of the Arabic

language textbook, specifically within the category of " HOTS " with the unit of analysis being " activities"

2.1 Statement of the Problem:

The research problem can be defined as follows:

- What are HOTS encompassed by the prescribed applications in the Arabic language textbook for the third and fourth grades of elementary education?
- What are the cognitive level was emphasized when designing the Arabic language curriculum for the third and fourth grades of elementary education, specifically in the context of applications?

2.2 Study Limitations:

This study included questions from the "I Understand and Discuss," "I Appreciate My Text," and " Produce orally " activities related to the "Listen and Speak" field of oral comprehension, as well as the "Read a Text" activity from the written comprehension field and the "Now I Can" activity from the integration section of the Arabic language textbook prescribed for third and fourth-grade students in elementary education. However, the analysis excluded Quranic texts, prophetic sayings, and poetic verses from the analysis.

The study specifically focused on the Arabic language textbook for the third and fourth grades of elementary education published by Oras for Publishing, Algeria, in 2017, which is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Education.

2.3 Sample of the Study

The study relied on the analysis of all reading comprehension questions included in the Arabic language textbook for the third and fourth grades of elementary education - the second generation. The total number of questions analyzed was [658] questions related to a text.373 questions for a third year and 285 questions for a four year

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

This part presented Barrett's Taxonomy categories and the frequency of each Barrett's Taxonomy categories found in the reading comprehension questions in Elementary Arabic Language Textbook in Algeria . The researcher analyzed Barrett's Taxonomy according to the reading comprehension questions types, afterward, the researcher could conclude that the most dominant Barrett's Taxonomy is Literal Comprehension (LC) with 232 questions or 62.1% for a third year and 205 questions or 71.9%for a four year of the whole reading comprehension question. Reorganization (R) became the second dominant of Barrett's Taxonomy with 100 questions or 26.8% for a third year and 42 questions or 14.7% for a four year of the whole reading comprehension question. The third dominant of Barrett's Taxonomy is

Inferential Comprehension (IC) with 30 questions or 8.04% for a third year and 42 questions or 14.7%for a four year of the entire questions. Meanwhile, 11 questions belonged to Evaluation (E) or 2.9% for a third year and 15 questions or 5.2% for a four year . The last, Appreciation (A) consisted of 0 question for third and four year, Which indicates that there are no questions related to For the Appreciation level .detailed distribution of Barrett's Taxonomy category, it can be seen in Table11.

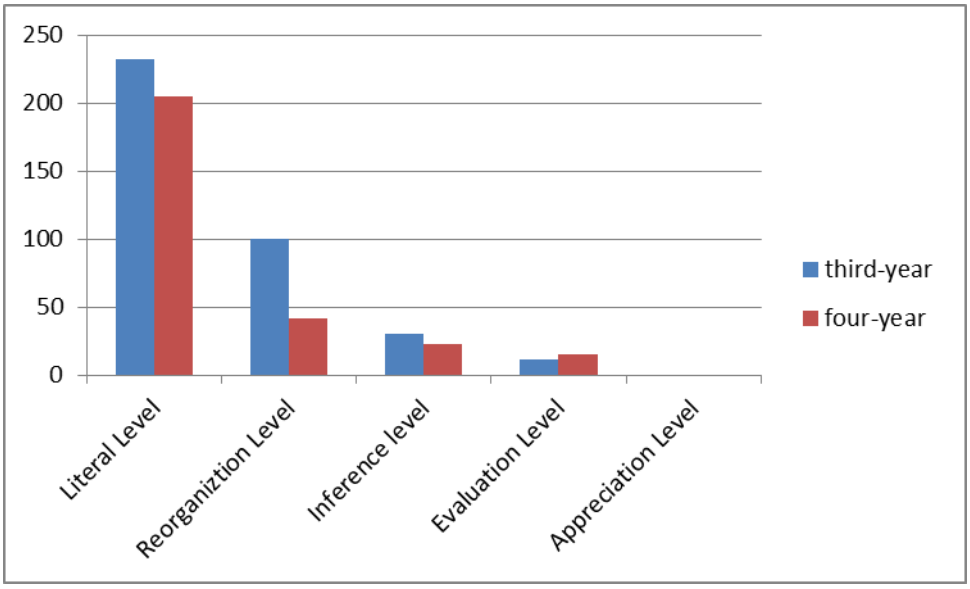


Figure-1: The Percentage of Five Levels of Barrett Taxonomy

3.1 Descriptors of the comprehension question levels

The reading comprehension questions available in the aforementioned chapters are collected and categorized according to Barrett's taxonomy of reading comprehension levels. To categorize the level of the questions, the descriptors of the level are at first defined. The function of the descriptor(s) is to check in what category or what level each comprehension question belongs to. The descriptors for each comprehension level are defined in Table-1.

Table -1: The five main levels of Barrett's Taxonomy and their subcategories

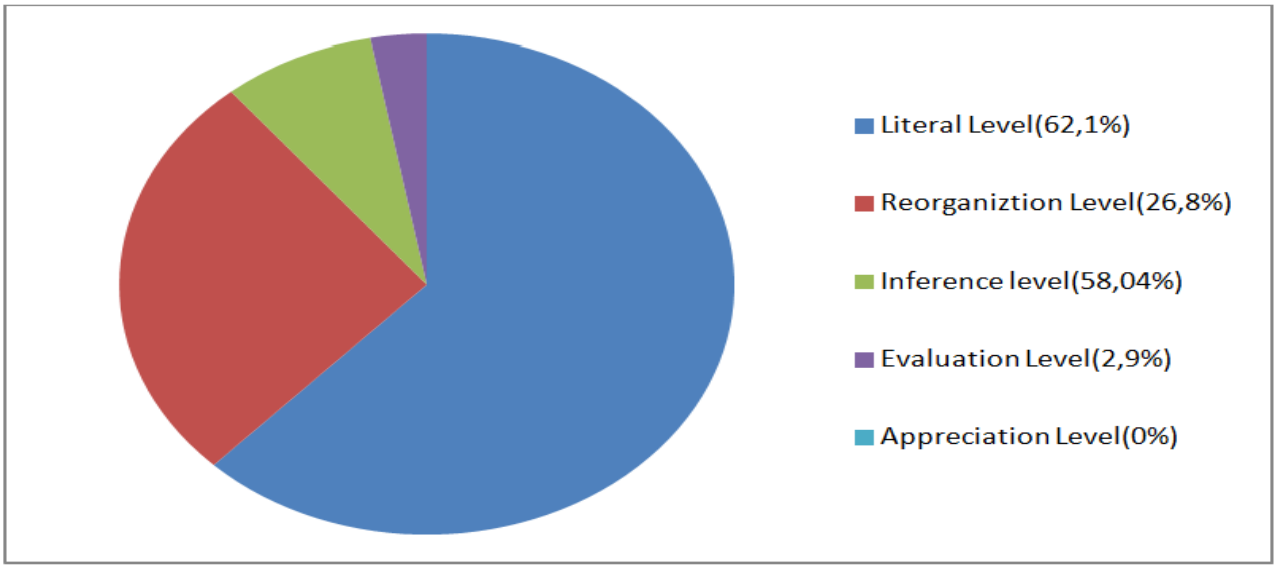
Levels	Subcategories
Literal	recognizing or recalling details
	recognizing or recalling main idea
	recognizing or recalling sequences
	recognizing or recalling comparison
	recognizing or recalling cause and effect relationships
	recognizing or recalling character traits
Reorganization	classifying
	outlining
	summarizing

	synthesizing
Inferential	inferring supporting details
	inferring main idea
	inferring sequences
	inferring comparison
	inferring cause and effect relationships
	inferring character traits
	predicting outcomes
	interpreting figurative language
Evaluation	judgments of reality or fantasy
	judgments of fact or opinion
	judgments of adequacy and validity
	judgments of appropriateness
	judgments of worth, desirability and acceptability
Appreciation	emotional response to the content
	Identify with Characters or Incidents
	React to the Author's Use of Language
	Make Imagery

3.2 Reading comprehension questions for a third-year primary education textbook

Using the defined descriptors, 373 questions are examined into the reading comprehension levels, Figure-2 presents the result of the categories of the questions. A careful look at the reading text is also done to help put the question into the appropriate category.

Figure-2: The Percentage of Five Levels of Barrett Taxonomy for third year



3-2-1 Literal comprehension questions

There are 232 reading comprehension questions constructed in the level of literal comprehension based on 6 descriptors defined.

Table-2 shows recognition of details, main ideas, sequence, comparison, cause and effect relationships, and traits by locating and identifying them in the reading passage**.**

Table-2: The Frequency of reading comprehension questions in literal level

Questions	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	**Q6**	
Frequency	208	07	00	02	09	06	**232**
Percentage	89%	3%	0%	0.6%	2.7%	1.8%	**100%**

The Table above showed the percentage of reading comprehension questions in literal level for each indicator. It can be seen that recognition or recall of detail got the highest percentage among others. It showed 89% of reading comprehension questions. While the following measures (main ideas, comparison, cause and effect relationships, and traits) obtained low percentages, all of them were within the range of 3% or less, which is an extremely low rate; While sequence did not receive any percent.

3-2-2 Reorganization comprehension questions

There are 100 reading comprehension questions constructed in the level of Reorganization comprehension based on 4 descriptors defined.

Table-3 shows classifying, outlining , summarizing, synthesizing by locating and identifying them in the reading passage**.**

Table-3: The Frequency of reading comprehension questions in Reorganization level

Questions	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	
Frequency	85	13	00	2	**100**
Percentage	85%	13%	00%	2%	**100%**

Based on the table above, the highest percentage of reading comprehension questions was classifying. It got 85**%** of reading comprehension questions, Then, the second high percentage was outlining (13**%**) ; And synthesizing got a percentage 2%, While summarizing did not receive any percent.

3-2-3 Inferential comprehension questions

There are 30 reading comprehension questions constructed in the level of Inferential comprehension based on 8 descriptors defined.

Table-4 shows inferring supporting details, inferring main idea, inferring sequences, inferring comparison, inferring cause and effect relationships, inferring character traits, predicting outcomes, interpreting figurative language by locating and identifying them in the reading passage.

Table (4): The Frequency of reading comprehension questions Inferential in level

Questions	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	**Q6**	**Q7**	**Q8**	
Frequency	10	11	00	07	00	00	02	00	**30**
Percentage	33.3%	36.6%	0%	23.3%	0%	0%	6%	0%	**100%**

Based on the Table above, the descriptors: inferring supporting details, inferring main idea, inferring comparison obtained similar percentages, ranging from 23% to 36.6%; While the other descriptors did not receive any percentage.

3-2-4 Evaluation comprehension questions

There are 11 reading comprehension questions constructed in the level of evaluation comprehension based on 5 descriptors defined.

Table-4 shows judgments of reality or fantasy, judgments of fact or opinion, judgments of adequacy and validity; judgments of appropriateness, judgments of worth, desirability and acceptability by locating and identifying them in the reading passage

Table-5: The Frequency of reading comprehension questions in Evaluation level

Questions	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	
Frequency	11	00	00	00	00	**11**
Percentage	100%	00%	00%	00%	00%	**100%**

According to the table above, the highest percentage of reading comprehension questions was judgments of reality or fantasy. It got 100**%** of reading comprehension questions, While the other descriptors did not receive any percentage.

3-2-5 Appreciation comprehension questions

There are 00 reading comprehension questions constructed in the level of evaluation comprehension based on 4 descriptors defined.

Table-4 shows emotional response to the content, Identify with Characters or Incidents, React to the Author's Use of Language, Make Imagery by locating and identifying them in the reading passage

Table-6: The Frequency of reading comprehension questions in Appreciation level

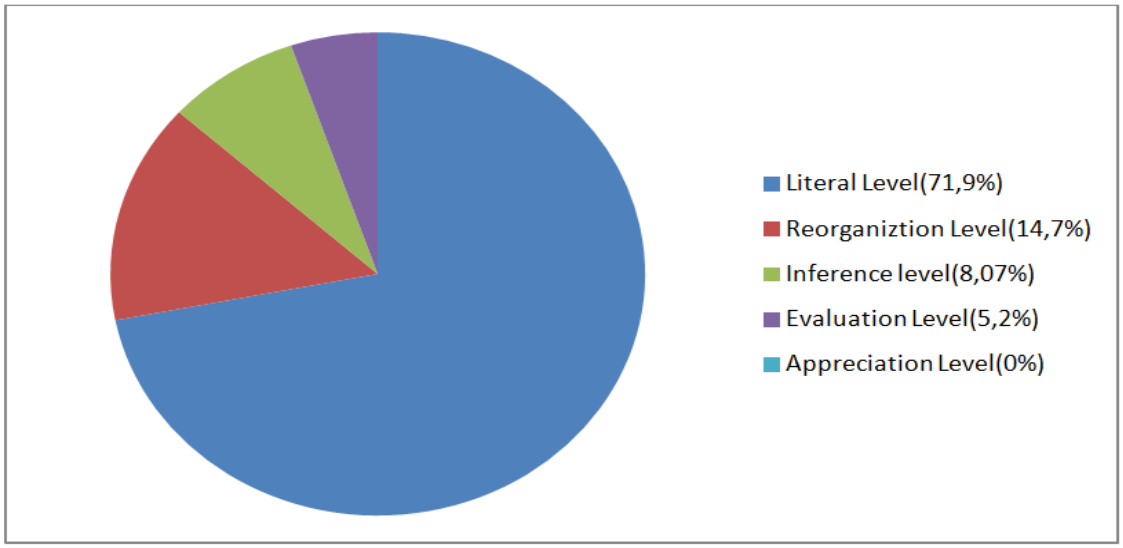
Questions	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Frequency	00	00	00	00	**00**
Percentage	00%	00%	00%	00%	**00%**

The table illustrates that The textbook does not contain any questions at this level

3-3 Reading comprehension questions for a four-year primary education textbook Appreciation

Using the defined descriptors, 285 questions are examined into the reading comprehension levels, Figure-3 presents the result of the categories of the questions. A careful look at the reading text is also done to help put the question into the appropriate category**.**

Figure-3: the Percentage of Five Levels of Barrett Taxonomy for 4 year



3-3-1 Literal comprehension questions

There are 205 reading comprehension questions constructed in the level of literal comprehension based on 6 descriptors defined.

Table-7 shows recognition of details, main ideas, sequence, comparison, cause and effect relationships, and traits by locating and identifying them in the reading passage**.**

Table-7: The Frequency of reading comprehension questions in literal level

Questions	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6

Frequency	152	13	02	12	26	0	**205**
Percentage	74.1%	6.3%	0.9%	5.8%	12.6%	0%	**100%**

The Table above showed the percentage of reading comprehension questions in literal level for each indicator. It can be seen that recognition or recall of detail got the highest percentage among others. It showed 74.1% of reading comprehension questions. While the following measures (main ideas, sequence, comparison, cause and effect relationships) obtained low percentages, all of them were within the range of 12% or less, which is an extremely low rate; While recalling character traits did not receive any percent.

3-3-2 Reorganization comprehension questions

There are 42 reading comprehension questions constructed in the level of Reorganization comprehension based on 4 descriptors defined.

Table-8 shows classifying, outlining, summarizing, synthesizing by locating and identifying them in the reading passage.

Table-8: The Frequency of reading comprehension questions in Reorganization level

Questions	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	
Frequency	24	17	00	01	**42**
Percentage	57.1%	40.4%	0%	2.3%	**100%**

Based on the table above, the highest percentage of reading comprehension questions was classifying. It got 57.1% of reading comprehension questions, Then, the second high percentage was outlining (40.4%) ; And summarizing got a percentage 2%, While synthesizing did not receive any percent.

3-3-3 Inferential comprehension questions

There are 23 reading comprehension questions constructed in the level of Inferential comprehension based on 8 descriptors defined.

Table-8 shows inferring supporting details, inferring main idea, inferring sequences, inferring comparison, inferring cause and effect relationships, inferring character traits, predicting outcomes, interpreting figurative language by locating and identifying them in the reading passage.

Table-8: The Frequency of reading comprehension questions in **Inferential** level

Questions	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	**Q6**	**Q7**	**Q8**	
Frequency	07	14	00	1	1	00	0	00	**23**
Percentage	30.4%	60.8%	0%	4.34%	4.34%	0%	0%	0%	**100%**

Based on the Table above, the highest percentage of reading comprehension questions was inferring main idea. It got 60.8% of reading comprehension questions, Then, the second high percentage was inferring supporting details (30.4) ; While the following measures (comparison, inferring cause,) obtained low percentages, all of them were within the range of 4.34% or less, which is an extremely low rate; While inferring sequences effect relationships, inferring character traits, predicting outcomes, interpreting figurative language did not receive any percent.

3-3-4 Evaluation comprehension questions

There are 15 reading comprehension questions constructed in the level of evaluation comprehension based on 5 descriptors defined.

Table-9 shows judgments of reality or fantasy, judgments of fact or opinion, judgments of adequacy and validity; judgments of appropriateness, judgments of worth, desirability and acceptability by locating and identifying them in the reading passage

Table-9: The Frequency of reading comprehension questions in **Evaluation** level

Questions	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	
Frequency	14	00	00	01	00	**15**
Percentage	93.3	00%	00%	6.6	00%	**100%**

According to the table above, the highest percentage of reading comprehension questions was judgments of reality or fantasy. It got 93.3% of reading comprehension questions, Then, the second high percentage was judgments of appropriateness (6.6**%) ;** While the other descriptors did not receive any percentage.

3-3-5 Appreciation comprehension questions

There are 00 reading comprehension questions constructed in the level of evaluation comprehension based on 4 descriptors defined. Table 4 shows emotional response to the content, Identify with Characters or Incidents, React to the Author's Use of Language, Make Imagery by locating and identifying them in the reading passage

Table-10: The Frequency of reading comprehension questions in Appreciation level

Questions	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	
Frequency	00	00	00	00	**00**
Percentage	00%	00%	00%	00%	**00%**

The table illustrates that The textbook does not contain any questions at this level.

4. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis toward Elementary Arabic Language Textbook in Algeria (3/4), the five categories in Barrett's Taxonomy are arranged from the highest to the lowest: Literal comprehension, reorganization, inferential, evaluation, and the appreciation questions. This finding is in agreement with several studies that reported that the reading comprehension questions focus on the low level of reading comprehension questions and give less weight to high level reading comprehension questions. The following part presents detailed findings for the five sub-questions (Literal Comprehension, Reorganization, Inferential, Appreciation)

Moreover, the findings of this research presented that the distribution of Barrett's Taxonomy category in the Elementary Arabic Language Textbook in Algeria (3/4) was imbalanced. Barrett's Taxonomy contains five categories and 27 sub-categories of thinking skill levels. In the Elementary Arabic Language Textbook in Algeria (3/4), it involved four categories and 13 sub-categories. The four categories of Barrett's Taxonomy included in the Textbook were Literal Comprehension (LC), Reorganization (R), Inferential Comprehension (IC), Evaluation (E). Meanwhile, the 18 sub-categories of Barrett's Taxonomy presented in the Textbook were Recognition of the Details, Recognition of the Main Ideas, Recognition of the Comparison, Recall of the Cause and Effect Relationships, Classifying , Outlining, synthesizing, Inferring Supporting Details, Inferring Main Ideas, inferring comparison, inferring cause and effect relationships, predicting outcomes, judgments of reality or fantasy, judgments of appropriateness.

In conclusion, the number of the question, whether in a lower and higher level of thinking should be balanced. Thus, the making of questions should be in well-planned as it gradually leads the students to ensure the level of thinking between or beyond the line higher level of thinking.

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