# CHAPTER IINTRODUCTION

This chapter elaborates on the background of the research, the reason for choosing the topic, the research questions, the research objectives, the research significance, and the definition of key terms.

## The Background of the Research

The 2013 curriculum has been implemented in the Indonesian education system since the 2013/2014 school year. This curriculum remains applied by the government to replace the 2006 curriculum, often referred to as the *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan* (KTSP). According to Ekawati (2016), Indonesia’s curriculum changes every decade, it caused by many factors such as the changes in society's needs, the new insight into the teaching-learning process, political issues, development of industry, and technology. Therefore, the 2013 curriculum is more directed to equip students with several competencies to meet education in the 21st century. Necessary competencies needed in the 21st-century, namely 4C, include Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication (Sumertha, 2019). In addition, based on the 2013 curriculum objectives applied by the Ministry of Education are contained in Permendikbud No. 69 of 2013, the purpose of the 2013 curriculum is to prepare Indonesian to have the ability to live religious, productive, creative, innovative, and practical and able to contribute to community life, nationhood, state, and world civilization. Although knowledge tends to be the utmost outcome of education, supporting students to deal with the changes in the 21st century, some other cognitive skills and competencies need to enhance at different levels. Thus, the 2013 curriculum was designed with various enhancements. One is an assessment of learning outcomes expected to help students improve Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) because high-level thinking skills can encourage students to think broadly and deeply about the subject matter. In this case, the students must think more creatively, innovatively, quickly, and responsively. Therefore, in this curriculum, students are trained to cultivate courage. The students will prepare in the ability to speak to solve a problem.

Moreover, the learning concept also changed in this latest curriculum, such as in the learning outcome seen in exam. This year the increase in class was carried out through the summative tests, which refer to the new policy on the 2013 curriculum. The new policy on the 2013 curriculum refers to the Circular of Minister of Education and Culture Number 1 of 2021, issued on February 1, 2021. The new rules include the mechanism for organizing Mid-Semester Assessment, Final Semester Assessment, and School Examination as a condition for class promotion during courageous learning related to preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Mid-Semester Assessment (abbreviated PTS) is a learning or assessment method using a portfolio or online. This exam does not need to measure overall curriculum achievement. In contrast, the Final Semester Assessment (abbreviated PAS) is a grade promotion requirement designed to encourage meaningful learning activities. Lastly, the School Examination (abbreviated US) measures and assesses student competency achievement against graduate competency standards for subjects not tested in the National Standardized School Summative Examination (USBN). The academic unit carries out the school examination to obtain recognition of learning achievement, which is one of the graduation requirements of the academic unit.

In addition to the changing rules and application of the assessment, the revision of the 2013 curriculum that the Minister of Education and Culture carried out in 2017 also stated three revisions focused on improving the relationship or linkage between Core Competencies (KI) and Basic Competencies (KD). It is also related to the Higher-Order Thinking Skills pattern. Higher-Order Thinking Skills is a person’s ability to understand, transfer and analyze information that has been learned and to find the best possible solution by making rational decisions to apply in real life (Heliyanti, Tirtanawati, & Purnama, 2020). Also, Ananiadou & Claro in research of Rimini & Spiezia (2016) stated that employees whose work will involve creativity, problem-solving, and critical analysis, among other skills, are Higher-Order Thinking Skills. It means HOTS is important in enchaining and developing a person’s creativity. Seeing how integrating HOTS into the learning process increases students’ critical thinking skills to evaluate information and solve issues is beneficial (Fakhira, Jihan, & Iskandar, 2020). In addition, Higher-Order Thinking Skills can affect a person’s thoughts, such as the ability to critically thinking and the speed and effectiveness of learning.

Recently, the problem is that most students have difficulty performing Higher-Order Thinking Skills, either when they are studying or applying them to the exam. The difficulties are not only experienced by students but also by teachers. The teachers’ task is not only to conduct HOTS assessments on students but also to carry out learning that can train students to have critical thinking skills. One of the implementations is on the test items given to students. In this case the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture tried to guide high school teachers on the concept of preparing for HOTS and improving their skills of high school teachers to compile HOTS questions (Sumertha, 2019). However, there are still teachers who have not implemented HOTS to the regulations applied by the government because the application of LOTS is still more done than adding questions that require a level of understanding classified as HOTS.

From the explanation above, it is seen that the researcher would like to research the implementation of HOTS in test items. Hence, this study aims to determine the Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) levels applied in the English examination at the Senior High School level.

## The Reason for Choosing the Topic

The researcher chose the topic based on their experience in teaching practice. Students have difficulties and lack understanding of simple vocabulary. It proved when the researcher gave questions about the meaning of the simple word that were asked. Many students were confused and have not been able to answer. This problem is certainly very far from the concept of the implication of the 2013 curriculum, in which students are required to be able to think critically or do Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in learning activities. Therefore, the researcher aims to determine the extent of HOTS application in school exams conducted and whether the creation of test items includes the HOTS that should be applied or not.

## The Research Question

Based on the problem statement of this research, the questions for this research are as follows:

1. What are the components of cognitive levels of HOTS applied in English test items in the academic year 2021-2022?
2. What are the teacher’s perceptions in making the cognitive levels of HOTS applied in English test items in the academic year 2021-2022?

## The Objectives of the Research

From the research questions above, the researcher formulates the objective of the study as follow:

1. To find out the cognitive levels of HOTS applied in English test items in the academic year 2021-2022.
2. To see the teacher’s perceptions in making the cognitive levels of HOTS applied in English test items in the academic year 2021-2022.

## The Significance of Study

A process writing procedure modified in this study is expected to give its contribution as follows:

1. Theoretically, this study is expected to be interpreted, and guidelines to use HOTS in every test item will be given to students.
2. Practically, the research is expected to inspire the teachers to always present HOTS according to the requirements referring to the 2013 curriculum on each English test item, such as in summative tests.

## The Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misinterpretation by terminology, the researcher needs to provide suitable meanings of the key terminology. Some terminologies are defined as follows:

1. HOTS: (1) in terms of transfer, (2) in terms of critical thinking, and (3) in problem-solving. (Brookhart, 2010)
2. English test: Standardized tests of English as Second Language (ESL) proficiency, such as the IELTS, TOEFL, and TOEIC, are used as critical indicators of ESL ability and typically test four different language skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. (Goto, Maki, & Kasai, 2010)