



## **Eighth Grade Textbook Reading Comprehension Questions and Barrett's Taxonomy: Teachers' Perspectives at Hebron District, Palestine**

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### **Abstract:**

The aim of this quantitative study is to examine the teachers' perspectives towards the reading comprehension questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade English student's textbook. The study also addresses the extent of comprehension questions based on Barrett's Taxonomy. The researchers used a questionnaire to collect their data and answer the research questions. The sample of the study included 92 teachers (males & females) from the government, private, and UNRWA schools in Hebron District. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) has been used to analyse the data. The results regarding the general attitudes of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers towards the textbook and the comprehension questions revealed that the teachers' views towards the textbook shape, objective, content, and teaching aids are positive and highly acceptable. However, the results regarding the extent of the availability of the reading comprehension questions in reference to Barrett's Taxonomy clearly show that the questions in *English for Palestine-Eighth Grade*, generally test literal comprehension, which means that students were frequently asked to recognize and recall ideas, and facts clearly identified in the texts. The researchers concluded that the higher order thinking skills in Barrett Taxonomy

are not adequately represented in the 8th grade textbook. They recommended incorporating these findings in the students' textbook and advised English language teachers to prepare and ask questions including high-level comprehension questions based on Barrett' Taxonomy.

**Key words:** Reading comprehension questions, higher-order thinking skills, Barrets' Reading Comprehension Taxonomy

#### ملخص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة الكمية بشكل عام الى دراسة وجهات نظر معلمين الصف الثامن تجاه أسئلة القراءة والفهم في كتاب اللغة الانجليزية للصف الثامن. وبالتحديد هدت الدراسة دراسة التوجهات العامة لمعلمي اللغة الانجليزية نحو كتاب اللغة الانجليزية للصف الثامن وأسئلة الفهم. والغرض الثاني من هذه الدراسة هو النظر في مدى توفر أسئلة الفهم حسب تصنيف باريت في كتاب اللغة الانجليزية للصف الثامن. اعتمدت الدراسة على استبيان لجمع البيانات والإجابة على أسئلة البحث. وتكونت عينة الدراسة من 92 من المعلمين (ذكور وإناث) من مدارس محافظة الخليل الحكومية، والخاصة ووكالة الغوث. تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام البرنامج الاحصائي SPSS. وقد أظهرت النتائج العامة للدراسة بشأن التوجهات العامة لمعلمي اللغة الانجليزية للصف الثامن نحو كتاب اللغة الانجليزية للصف الثامن وأسئلة الفهم أن وجهات نظر المعلمين نحو شكل الكتاب والهدف والمضمون والوسائل التعليمية إيجابية ومقبولة للغاية. و فيما يتعلق بمدى توافر أسئلة القراءة والفهم حسب تصنيف باريت أظهرت الدراسة بوضوح أن أسئلة الصف الثامن تركز على الفهم الحرفى. وهذا يعني أن الاسئلة المتداولة تركز على تذكر الأفكار والحقائق. وخلاصت الدراسة إلى أن مهارات التفكير العليا في تصنيف باريت إلى حد كبير لم تمثل بالشكل المناسب في كتاب الصف الثامن. وقد خلصت الدراسة إلى توصيات من شأنها تعزيز استخدام تتوافق مع تصنيف باريت من أجل تحسين جودة تعليم اللغة وعملية التعلم.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** أسئلة القراءة والفهم، مهارات التفكير العليا، القراءة والفهم وفق تصنيف باريت

## Introduction

Reading comprehension is an important skill that learners have to practice and enhance. For example, several studies confirm the importance of reading. Al-Qudah, Al-Khataybeh & Mohaidat (2002: 109) 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.

Language textbooks, usually, present learners with reading passages; these texts have two functions: to introduce new words and try to develop reading comprehension skills. They ask learners to read the texts and then to answer questions so as to check if they understood the passage well (Alfaki, 2014).

Therefore, the study adopted a quantitative method in order to examine the attitudes of English teachers towards the reading comprehension questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade English textbook.

## **Literature Review**

This section consists of two main parts. The first part presents importance of reading comprehension and Barrett's Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension, while the second part introduces previous studies related to evaluating reading comprehension questions.

### **Importance of Reading Skill**

Reading is considered an essential skill as it offers students with information, necessary skills, values, and fun. Reading enable learners to access information that is necessary for readers about the language. Al-Drees (2008:18) considers reading as a successful mechanism that enable learners to expand their English background knowledge, increase their vision, and stimulate their thoughts. Furthermore, Mayer (2003) points out that reading comprehension is a skill that facilitates learners' attainment of worthwhile information from texts. Likewise, Ali (2010) considered reading as one of the central skills and tools of learning.

McDonough and Shaw (1993) contend that reading is the most productive skill to teach in certain subjects. Furthermore, Rabel (2005) adds that reading develops a student's creativity and allows him/her to exercise and cultivate her/his creative thinking skills.

Hamdan (1991) confirms that reading comprehension is important because it trains learners to access material quickly and with depth, introduce simple language forms; correct spelling, pronunciation and rhythm,. According to Grabe (1991) and Levine, Ferenz, and Revez (2000) reading academic texts is considered a vital skill that language learners have to master. Without proper reading skills, the students will not be able to understand the information in the text, evaluate them, or apply the ideas in real life situations.

Reading comprehension questions play a very influential role as they are meant to advance thoughts, build background, and promote rational thinking (Fitria, Syarif & Refnaldi, 2014). Unfortunately, there are some problems with textbooks, as some may not cover the higher levels of reading comprehension questions (Rivas, 1999; Rahman, 2004; Alul, 2000; Ali, 2010; Abu Humos, 2012; Awad, 2013; Igbaria, 2013; Alfaki, 2014; Freahat & Smadi, 2014; Gökhan, 2016). They focus more on reading questions in literal levels and in appreciation levels, thus ignoring the higher level of reading questions.

### **Barrett's Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension**

Barrett's Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension includes five categories: literal, reorganization, inferential, evaluation and appreciation. 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, p. 62). 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 (Abu Humos, 2012). The last type of reading comprehension questions is appreciation;

it is called personal response which requires readers to respond emotionally (Day & Park, 2005).

### **Studies related to evaluating reading comprehension in English textbooks:**

There are a number of studies that investigated the comprehension questions in the English textbooks (Alul, 2000; Awad, 2013; Igbaria, 2013; Abdelrahman, 2014). For example, Alul (2000) conducted a study to evaluate the 8<sup>th</sup> grade English textbooks lower and higher level questions during the academic year 1999-2000. He found that lower-level questions were more represented than the higher ones in the studied textbooks.

Awad (2013) in his study aimed to evaluate the Palestinian 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks in terms of the EFL/ ESL textbook evaluation checklist from the teachers' perspectives in Nablus. Results show that these books are suitable for the Palestinian students, their culture and religion. Moreover, results show that exercises have medium degree in prompting critical thinking of the text.

Igbaria (2013) carried out a study to examine the diversity in the cognitive level epitomized by the WH-questions in the textbook based on Bloom's taxonomy and to examine the extent in which the WH-questions in the textbook emphasize high-level thinking in the textbook of Horizons for 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The results showed that the Horizons textbook emphasized questions that focus on the lower order thinking skills. Likewise, his findings demonstrated that 244 questions underlined the lower order thinking skills in the levels of cognition domain, while the three higher order thinking skills were represented in only 137.

Abdelrahman (2014) analyzed questions in English language textbooks, including the teacher's book and workbook for 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Jordan during the academic year 2012-2013. The researcher classified all the questions into the six levels of the new version of Bloom's Taxonomy (remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating). Then the question frequencies were calculated in each text book. He found that (55.11%) were for the two levels remembering and understanding. Applying had (16.18%) of representation in the textbooks. The other low level questions had (28.71%) of representation in

the textbooks. The results revealed that the differences were in favor of the low level questions as the percentage was (51.9%). Clearly, there was an emphasis on the lower level questions more than the higher-level questions.

### **Studies related to evaluating reading comprehension based on Barrett's Taxonomy**

Abu Humos (2012) examined the difficulty levels in the reading comprehension questions in English for Palestine 12<sup>th</sup> Grade English student's textbook. He aimed to find whether they are classified under Barrett's Taxonomy of Reading Comprehension higher thinking skills. The researcher also examined the 23 reading comprehension objectives in English for Palestine syllabus in order to find if they are compatible with Barrett's Reading Comprehension Taxonomy. Moreover, he examined whether there is an alignment between reading comprehension objectives and 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook questions. Abu Humos (2012) adopted the descriptive analytical method in order to carry out the study; the reading comprehension questions of 12 units were classified under Barrett's Taxonomy: the literal comprehension, reorganization, inferential, evaluation and appreciation levels. Results revealed that reading comprehension questions in English for Palestine 12<sup>th</sup> Grade English textbook are not fairly distributed under the five major reading skills according to Barrett's Taxonomy. He found that most of the reading comprehension questions in the 12<sup>th</sup> Grade textbook were literal questions which reached around 60% of the textbook total number of questions. Syllabus reading comprehension objectives were in agreement with higher order thinking skills; however there were significant differences between the objectives of the syllabus and the actual questions of 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook.

Candra (2014) conducted a study to examine whether the English textbook meet Barrett's taxonomy. The researcher found that there were only three levels of questions covered: literal recognition or recall, inference, and evaluation. Additionally, the findings revealed that were (54%) in literal recognition or recall level of questions (3) there were (45%) in inference level of questions (4) there was one question (1%) in evaluation level of questions. Surprisingly, there

was no appreciation questions represented in the textbooks. Because the reading comprehension questions do did not adequately cover Barrett' Taxanomy and mostly concentrated on literal recognition level of questions, the researcher concluded that the English textbook entitled "English" is not a good textbook.

Also, Sunggingwati (2003) used Barrett's taxonomy to evaluate reading comprehension questions. The researcher found that only three levels of reading comprehension based on Barrett's taxonomy were covered namely, literal, influential, and evaluation.

Similarly, Fitria, Syarif and Refnaldi (2014), in their descriptive study, used Barrett's Taxonomy to evaluate the reading comprehension questions forms covered in "English Texts in Use" and "Look Ahead" textbooks and the relationship between forms and levels of questions. Results show that reading comprehension questions in both textbooks are not representative. They observed that literal, inferential, evaluation, and appreciation levels were covered in both textbooks. Results convey that the literal level gets the largest portion in both. Inference and evaluation levels are higher in "English Texts in Use". Appreciation gets the lowest portion in both textbooks. It is clear that the four levels are more dominant in "English Text in Use".

The literature reviewed above revealed a lack of balance between Bloom's and Barrett's taxonomies and what there are in the textbooks (Rivas, 1999; Alul, 2000; Rahman, 2004; Ali, 2010; Abu Humos, 2012; Awad, 2013; Igbaria, 2013; Alfaki, 2014; Freahat & Smad, 2014; Gökhan, 2016). The adoption of such taxonomies may help to ensure that the reading delivered courses are of high quality. The literature review included several studies that utilized the Bloom's Taxonomy and Barrett's Taxonomy to evaluate reading comprehension questions in English textbooks. However, there were dearth in studies conducted on *English for Palestine – Eighth Grade*.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Most high schools students join Palestinian universities while they lack the higher order thinking skills needed for reading comprehension. So the researchers found that evaluating the textbook is necessary in order to identify the weaknesses and to make some improvements in the reading comprehension questions. The textbook *English for Palestine – Eighth Grade* is rich in the reading comprehension texts. Though, it is not known to what degree the texts are followed with appropriate questions that promote learners' higher critical thinking skills. Specifically, this study evaluates in depth the reading comprehension questions in reference to Barrett Taxonomy.

## **Questions of the Study**

1. What are the general attitudes of English language teachers towards the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook and its comprehension questions?

This question has four sub-questions:

- a. What are the general attitudes of teachers towards the general shape of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?
  - b. What are the general attitudes of teachers towards the objectives of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?
  - c. What are the general attitudes of teachers towards the content of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?
  - d. What are the general attitudes of teachers towards the teaching aids in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?
2. Based on the teachers' perspectives, to what extent do the comprehension questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook meet the Barrett's Taxonomy?

This question has five sub-questions:

- a. What are the attitudes of teachers towards the literal comprehension questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?
- b. What are the attitudes of teachers towards the reorganization questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?
- c. What are the attitudes of teachers towards the inferential questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?

- d. What are the attitudes of teachers towards the evaluation questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?
- e. What are the attitudes of teachers towards the appreciation questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?

## **Methodology**

This section addresses the methodology used in this research. The adopted methodology includes the population and sample, instrument for data collection, questionnaires, data collection to achieve the objectives of the study, and data analysis procedures.

## **Sample of the Study**

The sample of the study included 92 English Language 8th grade teachers from the government, UNRWA and private schools in Hebron District. It has been chosen randomly. Table 1 presents the demographic data of the sample:

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample**

Variable	Variable level	Number	Percentage%
<b>Directorate of Education</b>	South Hebron	35	38.0
	The Center of Hebron	30	32.6
	North Hebron	27	29.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	43	46.7
	Male	49	53.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Year of experience</b>	less than 5 year	22	23.9
	6-10 years	34	37.1
	11-15 years	18	19.5
	more than 16 years	18	19.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Qualification</b>	Diploma	4	4.3
	Bachelor	72	78.3
	Master	16	17.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Type of school</b>	government school	75	81.5
	UNRWA school	9	9.8

	private school	8	8.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Number of times you've taught the 8<sup>th</sup> grade</b>	1-5 times	60	65.2
	6-10 times	15	16.3
	more than 11 times	17	18.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the sample of teachers. Regarding their Directorate of Education, 35 (38%) teachers are from South Hebron, 30 (32.6%) teachers from the Centre of Hebron, and 27 (29.4%) teachers from the North of Hebron. Regarding their gender, 43 (46.7%) teachers are females and 49 (53.3%) are males. Participants' years of teaching experience ranged from less than 5 tears to more than 16 years. The teachers who have less than 5 years of experience are 22 (23.9%) teachers. Those who have 6-10 years of experience are the largest category as there are 34 teachers representing 37% of the participants. The teachers who have 11-15 years of experience are 18 (19.5%) and an equivalent percentage is to the teachers who have more than 16 years of experience. Regarding the teachers' qualifications, the overwhelming majority of the participants (72) have a bachelor degree and they represent 78.3% from the sample of the study. 16 participants have an M.A degree and that represents 17.4% from the participants. Only four teachers have a diploma degree and that represents 4.3% of the participants. The majority 75 (81.5%) belong to public schools. Only nine (9.8%) belong to UNRWA schools, and eight 98.(7%) belong to private schools. Regarding the number of times they've taught the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, of the 92 participants, the majority (60) of the participants reported that taught that class less than 5 times and that represent s 65% of the participants; only 17 teachers taught the 8<sup>th</sup> grade more than 11 times and that represents 18.5% of the participants. Finally, 15 (16.3%) taught the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class from 6 to 10 times.

## **Instrumentation**

A survey questionnaire was structures to collect the research's primary data.

### **Development of the Questionnaire**

The researchers reviewed some previous studies and related literature for developing the questionnaire (Rivas, 1999; Alul, 2000; Rahman, 2004; Farrah, & Tushyeh, 2010; Ali, 2010; Abu Humos, 2012; Awad, 2013; Igbaria, 2013; Alfaki, 2014; Freahat & Smad, 2014; Gökhan, 2016). The questionnaire has two sections. Section one aimed to collect demographic data, whereas in section two teachers were asked to answer the items by putting a tick (✓) in the box that reflects their views to the given statements. The items were grouped into two parts:

Part One: deals with general questions about the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Textbook (Shape, Content, Objectives, and teaching aids):

1. Textbook: this domain includes four parts and they consist 29 questions
  - a. General Shape: (items 1-5)
  - b. Objectives: (items 6-11)
  - c. Content: ( items 12-24)
  - d. Teaching Aids: (items 25-29)

Part Two: is about the reading comprehension questions in reference to the Barrett Taxonomy:

- A. Literal Comprehension (items 1-6)
- B. Reorganization (items 7-10)
- C. Inferential (items 11-18)
- D. Evaluation (items 19-23)
- E. Appreciation (items 24-27)

### **Administration of the Questionnaire**

The questionnaire targeted 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers from the government, UNRWA and private schools in Hebron district in the first semester of the academic year

(2016-2017). The researchers administered 120 copies of teachers' questionnaire. Only 92 copies were collected.

### **Questionnaire Validity and Reliability:**

To ensure a high level of validity, the questionnaire has been handed to a number of concerned experts from An-Najah National University and Al-Quds University for evaluation. They presented their views on the questionnaire in terms of its content, clarity of items' meaning and suitability. They also proposed what they deem necessary to modify the formulation of items, to avoid any misunderstanding and to assure that the questionnaire meets aims of the study. The final copy of the questionnaire was modified in accordance with the experts' recommendations.

### **Reliability**

The questionnaire reliability was examined and the result showed that the overall Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of the questionnaire was (0.93), which indicates a very good reliability of the entire questionnaire.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

The data was analyzed using the SPSS program version 22 and descriptive analyses were run.

### **Findings**

This section presents the results of the study. Each category in the questionnaire is discussed in the light of the teachers' perceptions as detected in the questionnaire as well as in reference to Barrett's Taxonomy.

#### **Question One: What are the general attitudes of English language teachers towards the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook and its comprehension questions?**

The general attitudes of English language teachers towards the 8<sup>th</sup> grade student's textbook comprehension questions are presented separately in the subsequent sections (Shape, Objectives, Content, and Teaching Aids). Each item in the

questionnaire is arranged in the order of the rating received from the highest to the lowest. That is the items that got high degree of agreement are placed at the top and items with low degrees of agreement are placed at the bottom of the list. Each category consists of items that describe the aspect of the category.

**First sub-question:** What are the general attitudes of teachers towards the general shape of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?

**Table 2: Means, standard deviations, percentages of teachers' attitudes towards the general shape of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade English student's textbook..**

Paragraphs		Mean	Std. deviation	Percentage %	Degree of attitude
q3	The textbook has a list of contents.	3.28	0.69	82.00	High
q4	The title of the book is appealing.	2.90	0.58	72.50	High
q2	The textbook is rich with illustrations that facilitate students' learning.	2.87	0.56	71.75	High
q1	The outside cover of the book is attractive.	2.83	0.69	70.75	High
q5	The textbook has a list of references.	2.45	0.69	61.25	High
<b>Total Degree</b>		2.87	0.64	71.65	<b>High</b>

The above table shows that teachers' attitudes towards the general shape of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Palestinian English student's textbook were high; the average is between (2.45-3.28). The highest response paragraph according to the relative mean is as follows:

In item (3), the relative mean equals (3.28) with percentage (82%) which states the textbook has a list of contents, and the lowest response according to the relative mean is as follows:

In item (5) the relative mean equals (2.45) with percentage (61.25%) which states the textbook has a list of references.

**Second sub-question:** What are the general attitudes of teachers towards the objectives of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?

**Table 3: Means, standard deviations, percentages of teachers' attitudes towards the objectives of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade English student's textbook.**

<b>Paragraphs</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>	<b>Degree of attitude</b>
q9	The objectives are relevant to the local culture.	2.87	0.65	71.74	High
q10	The objectives correspond with the modern developments around the world.	2.85	0.63	71.20	High
q11	There is a balance in the presence of reading comprehension questions for the main skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing.	2.79	0.67	69.84	High
q8	The objectives are clear and specific.	2.66	0.65	66.58	High
q6	The objectives are related to the learners' needs and interests.	2.61	0.63	65.22	High
q7	The objectives meet the individual differences among students.	2.48	0.64	61.96	High
<b>Total Degree</b>		<b>2.71</b>	<b>0.64</b>	<b>67.75</b>	<b>High</b>

The above table shows that the teachers' attitudes towards the objectives of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook were high; the averages ranged between (2.48-2.87). The highest response item according to the relative mean is as follows: Regarding item (9), the relative mean equals (2.87) with percentage (71.74%) which states that the objectives are relevant to the local culture. The lowest response according to the relative mean is as follows:

Regarding item (7), the relative mean equals (2.48) with percentage (61.96%) which states the objectives meet the individual differences among students.

**Third sub-question:** What are the general attitudes of teachers towards the content of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?

**Table 4: Means, standard deviations, percentages of teacher's attitudes towards the content of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade English student's textbook.**

<b>Paragraphs</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>	<b>Degree of attitude</b>
q14	The content enriches student's general knowledge about different topics	2.95	0.54	73.64	high
q13	There is a variety of reading comprehension questions.	2.90	0.59	72.55	high
q21	The Questions on the reading text have sequence.	2.82	0.59	70.38	high
q22	The Questions on the reading text are appropriate to their purposes	2.73	0.71	68.21	high
q15	The content presents ethical values and good manners.	2.65	0.76	66.30	high
q19	The Questions on the reading text challenging and thought provoking	2.64	0.67	66.03	high
q23	The Questions on the reading text let students draw conclusions from the text.	2.63	0.72	65.76	high
q24	The Questions on the reading text support students in making a	2.62	0.72	65.49	High

<b>Paragraphs</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>	<b>Degree of attitude</b>
	summary				
q12	The content is interesting, attractive and enjoyable to the students.	2.59	0.73	64.67	High
q16	The content helps students relate the text to their personal experience.	2.59	0.67	64.67	High
q18	The Questions on the reading text ask something definite in simple, clear, straightforward English that the students understand	2.54	0.65	63.59	High
q20	The Questions on the reading text adapted to the age, abilities and interests of the pupils to whom it is addressed	2.53	0.62	63.32	High
q17	The time that is given to answer the reading comprehension questions is sufficient.	2.48	0.88	61.96	High
<b>Total Degree</b>		2.67	0.68	66.66	<b>High</b>

The above table shows that the teachers' attitudes towards the content of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook were high and positive; the averages ranged between (2.48-2.95). The highest response paragraph according to the relative mean is as follows: In paragraph (14), the relative mean equals (2.95) with percentage (73.64%) which states the content enriches student's general knowledge about different topics. The researchers believe that the content of the reading text adds knowledge and information about various topics.

And the lowest response according to the relative mean is as follows: regarding item (17), the relative mean equals (2.48) with percentage (61.96%) which states

that the time that is given to answer the reading comprehension questions is sufficient.

**Fourth sub-question:** What are the general attitudes of teachers towards the teaching aids in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?

**Table 5: Means, standard deviations, percentages of teachers' attitudes towards the teaching aids in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook.**

Paragraphs		Mean	Std. deviation	Percentage %	Degree of attitude
q28	Teachers are given techniques for activating students' background knowledge before reading the text.	2.87	0.68	71.74	High
q27	The correct or suggested answers are given for the exercises in the textbook.	2.84	0.67	70.92	High
q25	The teaching aids that are used stimulate students' attention.	2.77	0.66	69.29	High
q26	The teaching aids and strategies help to relieve anxiety and boredom.	2.76	0.70	69.02	High
q29	The aids and activities used help to build students' confidence.	2.73	0.76	68.21	High
<b>Total Degree</b>		<b>2.79</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>69.84</b>	<b>High</b>

The table illustrates that the teachers' attitudes towards the teaching aids in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook were high and acceptable; the average ranged between (2.73-2.87). The highest response item according to the relative mean is as follows:

In item (28), the relative mean equals (2.87) with percentage (71.74%) which states that the teachers are given techniques for activating students' background knowledge before reading the text.

The lowest response according to the relative mean is as follows: in item (29) the relative mean equals (2.73) with percentage (68.21%) which states that the aids and activities used help to build students' confidence.

**Question Two: Based on the teachers' perspectives, to what extent do the comprehension questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook meet the Barrett's Taxonomy?**

The study revealed that there is no balance in the representation of the reading comprehension questions. Instead of focusing on higher level of reading comprehension questions, the focus was on low level of reading questions as shown in Figure 1.

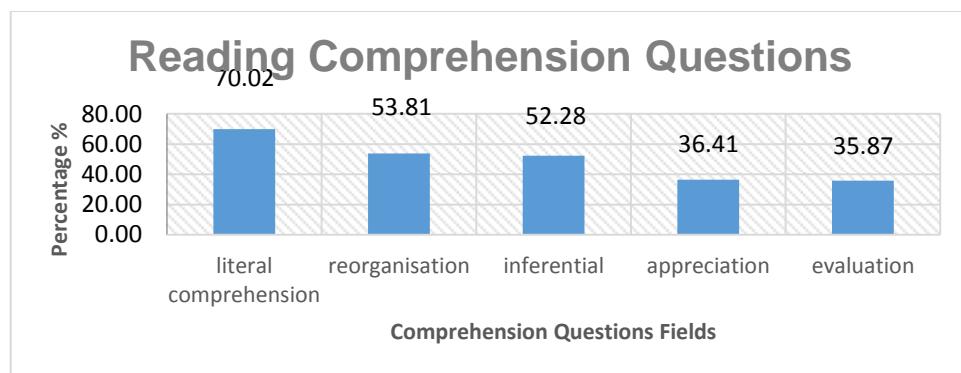


Figure (1): Means for Barrett Taxonomy

Figure 1, the five categories in Barrett's Taxonomy are arranged from the highest to the lowest: Literal comprehension, reorganization, inferential, appreciation, and the evaluation 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, and Evaluation):

## **Literal comprehension**

- a. What are the attitudes of teachers towards the literal comprehension questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?

**Table 6: Means, standard deviations, percentages of teachers' attitudes towards the literal comprehension questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook.**

<b>Paragraphs</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>	<b>Degree of attitude</b>
q31	Recognize or recall of Main Ideas	2.97	0.62	74.18	High
q32	Recognize or recall of a Sequence	2.83	0.57	70.65	High
q30	Recognize or recall of Details	2.80	0.63	70.11	High
q33	Recognize or recall of Comparison	2.76	0.58	69.02	High
q35	Recognize or recall of Character Traits	2.73	0.73	68.21	High
q34	Recognize or recall of Cause and Effect Relationships	2.72	0.76	67.93	High
<b>Total Degree</b>		<b>2.80</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>70.02</b>	<b>High</b>

The above table shows that the teachers' attitudes towards the literal comprehension questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade student's textbook were high; the averages ranged between (2.72-2.97). The highest response item according to the relative mean is as follows:

Regarding item 31 (Recognize or recall of Main Ideas), it got a relative mean equals (2.97) with percentage (74.18%). The lowest response according to the relative mean is as follows:

Regarding item (34) (Recognize or recall of Cause and Effect Relationships), it got a relative mean that equals (2.72) with percentage (67.93%).

## **Reorganization**

- b. What are the attitudes of teachers towards the reorganization questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?

**Table 7: Means, standard deviations, percentages of teacher's attitudes towards the reorganization questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook.**

<b>Paragraphs</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>	<b>Degree of attitude</b>
q3 6	Classify information	2.22	0.72	55.43	Moderate
q3 9	Synthesize the reading text/ information	2.21	0.73	55.16	Moderate
q3 8	Summarize the reading text/ information	2.10	0.59	52.45	Moderate
q3 7	Outline the reading text/ information	2.09	0.60	52.17	Moderate
<b>Total Degree</b>		<b>2.15</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>53.80</b>	<b>moderate</b>

The table shows that teachers' attitudes towards the reorganization questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook were moderate; the average ranged between (2.09-2.22).

The highest response item according to the relative mean is as follows:

In item (36), the relative mean equals (2.22) with percentage (55.43%) which states (Classify information). The lowest response is as follows:

In item (37) the relative mean equals (2.09) with percentage (52.17%) which states (Outline the reading text/ information).

### **Inferential**

- c. What are the attitudes of teachers towards the inferential questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?

**Table 8: Means, standard deviations, percentages of teachers' attitudes towards the inferential questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook.**

<b>Paragraphs</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>	<b>Degree of attitude</b>
q41	Infer Main Ideas	2.17	0.62	54.35	moderate
q42	Infer Sequence	2.15	0.59	53.80	moderate
q43	Infer Comparisons	2.11	0.52	52.72	moderate
q40	Infer Supporting Details	2.11	0.58	52.72	moderate

<b>Paragraphs</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>	<b>Degree of attitude</b>
q46	Predict Outcomes	2.11	0.58	52.72	moderate
q47	Interpret Figurative Language	2.07	0.63	51.63	moderate
q44	Infer Cause and Effect Relationships	2.01	0.50	50.27	moderate
q45	Infer Character Traits	2.00	0.51	50.00	moderate
	<b>Total Degree</b>	<b>2.09</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>52.28</b>	<b>moderate</b>

The shows that teachers' attitudes towards the inferential questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook were moderate; the average is between (2.00-2.17). The highest response item is as follows:

Regarding item (41), the relative mean equals (2.17) with percentage (54.35%) which states (Infer Main Ideas). The lowest response is as follows:

Regarding item (45) the relative mean equals (2.00) with percentage (50.00%) which states (Infer character Traits).

## Evaluation

- d. What are the attitudes of teachers towards the appreciation questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook?

**Table 9: Means, standard deviations, percentages of teachers' attitudes towards the evaluation questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook.**

<b>Paragraphs</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>	<b>Degree of attitude</b>
q48	Make Judgments of Reality or Fantasy	1.50	0.88	37.50	Low
q50	Make Judgments of Adequacy and Validity	1.46	0.76	36.41	Low
q52	Make Judgments of Worth, Desirability and Acceptability	1.42	0.71	35.60	Low
q51	Make Judgments of	1.40	0.71	35.05	Low

<b>Paragraphs</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>	<b>Degree of attitude</b>
Appropriateness				
q49 Make Judgments of Fact or Opinion	1.39	0.71	34.78	Low
<b>Total Degree</b>	<b>1.43</b>	<b>0.76</b>	<b>35.87</b>	Low

The table shows that teacher's attitudes towards the evaluation questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook were low; the average ranged between (1.39-1.50). The highest response item is as follows:

In item (48), the relative mean equals (1.50) with percentage (37.50%) which states (Make Judgments of Reality or Fantasy). The lowest response is as follows:

In item (49) the relative mean equals (1.39) with percentage (34.78%) which states (Make Judgments of Fact or Opinion).

## Appreciation

- What are the attitudes of the teachers towards the appreciation questions in the Eighth Grade textbook?

**Table 10: Means, standard deviations, percentages of teachers' attitudes towards the appreciation questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook.**

<b>Paragraphs</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>	<b>Degree of attitude</b>
q54 Identify with Characters or Incidents	1.61	0.49	40.22	Low
q53 Response Emotionally to the Content	1.60	0.49	39.95	Low
q55 React to the Author's Use of Language	1.34	0.48	33.42	Low
q56 Make Imagery (Dramatise the reading text).	1.28	0.45	32.07	Low
<b>Total Degree</b>	<b>1.46</b>	<b>0.48</b>	<b>36.41</b>	<b>Low</b>

The table shows that the teachers' attitudes towards the appreciation questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook were low; the average ranged between (1.28-1.61). The highest response item is as follows:

In item (54), the relative mean equals (1.61) with percentage (40.22%) which states (Identify with Characters or Incidents). The lowest response according to the relative mean is as follows:

In item (56) the relative mean equals (1.28) with percentage (32.07%) which states (Make Imagery (Dramatise the reading text).

#### **4.2.1 Discussion of the results**

The findings in this study reveal that the questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade *English for Palestine* generally test literal comprehension. This means that students were frequently asked to recognize and recall of actions and themes clearly identified in the texts. The researchers conclude that the higher order thinking skills in Barrett's Taxonomy, by and large, are not adequately represented in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade *English for Palestine*, and this comes in line with the majority of the results of the previous studies. To illustrate, Rivas (1999), Alul (2000), Sunggingwati (2003), Rahman (2004), Abu Humos (2012), Igbaria (2013), Freahat and Smadi (2014), Alfaki (2014), Fitria, Syarif and Refnaldi. (2014), Abdelrahman (2014), Gökhan (2016) and others agree on the shortage in the reading comprehension questions that develop higher order thinking skills in textbooks. Abu Humos (2012) found that most of the reading comprehension questions in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook were literal questions which amounted to 60% of the textbook total number of questions. Igbaria (2013) showed that 244 questions emphasized the Lower Order thinking skills in the levels of cognition domain while 137 questions emphasized the three higher order thinking skills. Ifaki (2014) examined nine texts of different levels and lengths. Results revealed that 89% of the questions in the sample were Low Order Thinking Skills questions, 59% are remembering and 30% understanding. None are geared to the High Order Thinking Skills. Furthermore, results showed that 10.2% of the questions belonged to High Order Thinking Skills; 6.1% related to 'applying' while 4.1% related to 'evaluating'. Finally, none of the questions belonged to other Higher

Thinking Skills 'Analyzing and Creating' which indicated that SPINE did not cover all thinking skills in Bloom's taxonomy.

These also come in agreement with the statement of Abdelrahman (2014) that the emphasis was on the low level questions.

Fitria, Syarif and Refnaldi. (2014) found that Appreciation gets the lowest portion in the textbooks under evaluation. The most dominant portion is Literal level whereas the Appreciation Level is mainly not found. This is also in agreement with Gökhan (2016) who reported that the course book lacked the High Level Cognitive Skills involved in Bloom's Taxonomy. These are also in line with Myhil et al (2006) who found that the factual questions are the most common.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In this study, the researchers examined the general attitudes of English language towards the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook and the reading comprehension questions based on Barrett's Taxonomy. Additionally, they examined to what extent the comprehension questions in the *Eighth Grade* of English student's textbook meet the Barrett's Taxonomy based on the teachers' perspectives. It can be concluded from the results that the attitudes of English Eight Grade teachers towards the textbook (general shape, objectives, content, teaching aids) got high percentage, the general shape got high degree 71.65%, the objectives were 67.75%, the content 66.66% and the teaching aids were 69.84%. This percentage is attributed to the great interest from the Ministry of Education and curriculum planners in textbook's shape and criteria for textbook evaluation.

The study results revealed the attitudes of English 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers towards reading comprehension questions. It can be concluded that comprehension questions got high degrees regarding the lowest level of Barrett's Taxonomy; literal comprehension was 70.02%. In comparison, the results showed that the highest levels of Barrett comprehension questions got the lowest degree. The Evaluation was 35.87% and Appreciation was 36.41%. The researchers concluded that the questions with the lower level were dominant especially literal

comprehension levels. The findings are in agreement with several studies that reported that the reading comprehension questions focus on the low level of reading comprehension questions while giving less weight to high level reading comprehension questions.

### **Recommendations for Teachers**

Results of the study revealed that lower levels of comprehension questions were very high. "The literal comprehension questions" and "the higher levels of comprehension" were low especially in terms of "Evaluation". It is recommended that English language teachers prepare reading comprehension questions and ask questions including high level comprehension questions which cover Barrett' Taxonomy (evaluation and appreciation levels of questions). Based on empirical research and related studies that evaluated higher thinking levels of reading comprehension, it is expected that teachers use more higher level questions than found in the textbook.

### **Recommendations for Textbook Writers**

It is suggested that textbook writers could benefit from these findings and they may in turn revise, adapt and modify reading comprehension questions to be compatible with high level thinking taxonomies as Barrett and Bloom. Therefore, students of high levels can better comprehend the reading texts.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

It is recommended that further studies be conducted with different focuses and designs. Applying similar researches on other grades especially on lower and secondary grades is highly appreciated.

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## Appendix One

### Questionnaire

Dear Teachers:

This questionnaire, which is dedicated for research only, is designed as an instrument to collect data for the study "**Eighth Grade Textbook Reading Comprehension Questions and Barrett's Taxonomy: Teachers' Perspectives at Hebron District, Palestine**". The researchers aim to evaluate the using of reading comprehension questions in the Palestinian English Textbook for the 8th Grade. The questionnaire is composed of two sections: Section one is about demographic information and section two is divided into two parts related to reading comprehension questions: Part One: Asks general questions about the 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbook (Shape, Content, Objectives, and teaching aids) . Part Two is about the reading comprehension questions in reference to Barrett Taxonomy.

**Section One: Demographic Information:** Please, tick (✓) the appropriate box.

A-School:
B-Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male
C-Year of experience: <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 5 year <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 years <input type="checkbox"/> 11-15 years <input type="checkbox"/> more than 16 years
D- Qualification: <input type="checkbox"/> Diploma <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> Master
E- Type of school: <input type="checkbox"/> Government school <input type="checkbox"/> UNRWA school <input type="checkbox"/> private school
F- Number of times you've taught the eighth grade : <input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 times <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 <input type="checkbox"/> more than 11 times

Section Two: Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following items by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate box using the scale given below.

SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree

Part One: Asks general questions about the Eighth Grade Textbook (Shape, Content, Objectives, and teaching aids).

	Part (1)Textbook	SD	D	A	SA
	<b>A. General Shape</b>				

	<b>Part (1)Textbook</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
	<b>A. General Shape</b>				
1.	The outside cover of the book is attractive.				
2.	The textbook is rich with illustrations that facilitate students' learning.				
3.	The textbook has a list of contents.				
4.	The title of the book is appealing.				
5.	The textbook has a list of references.				
	<b>B. Objectives</b>				
1.	The objectives are related to the learners' needs and interests.				
2.	The objectives meet the individual differences among students.				
3.	The objectives are clear and specific.				
4.	The objectives are relevant to the local culture.				
5.	The objectives correspond with the modern developments around the world.				
6.	There is a balance in the presence of reading comprehension questions for the main skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing.				
	<b>C. Content</b>				
1.	The content is interesting, attractive and enjoyable to the students.				
2.	There is a variety of reading comprehension questions.				
3.	The content enriches students general knowledge about different topics				
4.	The content presents ethical values and good manners.				
5.	The content helps students relate the text to their personal experience.				
6.	The time that is given to answer the reading comprehension questions is sufficient.				
7.	The Questions on the reading text ask something definite in simple, clear, straightforward English that				

	<b>Part (1)Textbook</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
	<b>A. General Shape</b>				
	the students understand				
8.	The Questions on the reading text challenging and thought provoking				
9.	The Questions on the reading text adapted to the age, abilities and interests of the pupils to whom it is addressed				
10.	The Questions on the reading text have sequence.				
11.	The Questions on the reading text are appropriate to their purposes.				
12.	The Questions on the reading text let students draw conclusions from the text.				
13.	The Questions on the reading text support students in making a summary.				
	<b>D. Teaching Aids</b>				
1.	The teaching aids that are used stimulate students' attention.				
2.	The teaching aids and strategies help to relieve anxiety and boredom.				
3.	The correct or suggested answers are given for the exercises in the textbook.				
4.	Teachers are given techniques for activating students' background knowledge before reading the text.				
5.	The aids & activities used help to build students' confidence.				

**Part Two:** This part is about the reading comprehension questions in the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Palestinian English Student's Textbook in reference to The Barrett Taxonomy.

	<b>The Reading comprehension Questions help learners to</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
1.	Recognize or recall of Details.				
2.	Recognize or recall of Main Ideas.				
3.	Recognize or recall of a Sequence.				

4.	Recognize or recall of Comparison.			
5.	Recognize or recall of Cause & Effect Relationships.			
6.	Recognize or recall of Character Traits.			
7.	Classify information.			
8.	Outline the reading text/ information.			
9.	Summarize the reading text/ information.			
10.	Synthesize the reading text/ information.			
11.	Infer Supporting Details.			
12.	Infer Main Ideas.			
13.	Infer Sequence.			
14.	Infer Comparisons.			
15.	Infer Cause and Effect Relationships.			
16.	Infer Character Traits.			
17.	Predict Outcomes.			
18.	Interpret Figurative Language.			
19.	Make Judgments of Reality or Fantasy.			
20.	Make Judgments of Fact or Opinion.			
21.	Make Judgments of Adequacy and Validity.			
22.	Make Judgments of Appropriateness.			
23.	Make Judgments of Worth, Desirability and Acceptability.			
24.	Response Emotionally to the Content.			
25.	Identify with Characters or Incidents.			
26.	React to the Author's Use of Language.			
27.	Make Imagery (Dramatise the reading text).			

**Thank You For Your Cooperation**