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# The Compatibility between the Reading Questions and Reading Objectives at High School Level in Türkiye

## ABSTRACT

As communicative language use is of growing importance, countries worldwide focus on English language teaching through communicative and authentic approach. As a part of communication in language education and assessment, the reading skill plays a crucial role in the curriculum as well as the teaching and assessment practices in Türkiye. In 2023, the Ministry of Education introduced a shift in the assessment practices by publishing sample questions for testing reading skills, aligning them with the objectives derived from the existing curriculum. As this initiative is relatively recent, no studies in the literature have directly examined the alignment between these sample questions and the objectives. The present research aims to explore the cognitive levels of learning objectives embedded in the questions, examine how these levels progress from grades 9 to 12 and analyze the alignment between the objectives and sample questions provided by the Ministry of Education, employing Bloom's revised taxonomy as the analytical framework. The results show that there are different distributions of levels through the grades, and the number of compatible questions outnumber the number of incompatible ones a lot; however, some questions still fail to adequately assess higher-order cognitive skills.

**Keywords:** language teaching, reading skill, reading objectives, assessment of reading, Bloom's revised taxonomy.

## Introduction

In today's globalized world, English has become the dominant language of international communication, enabling individuals from diverse regions to interact effectively. Learning English, therefore, has been a priority for many nations and individuals across the globe for various social, economic, and educational reasons. In Türkiye, the teaching of English at the high school level is largely shaped by the national English curriculum, which is designed by the Ministry of National Education.

### A Brief Background of English Curriculums in Türkiye

Türkiye is among the countries that acknowledge the critical role of English in education and continue to adopt their English language teaching (ELT) practices accordingly. In an attempt to change Türkiye's ELT practice, the Turkish Ministry of National Education and the Turkish Higher Education Council decided to make significant modifications to the country's English language policy in 1997. In this regard, a plan known as "The Ministry of Education Development Project"—a significant curriculum innovation project in ELT—was started to encourage

teaching of English in Turkish educational institutions (Kırkgöz, 2007).

According to Sönmez and Köksal (2022), three major curriculum reforms were implemented in Türkiye between the late 20th and early 21st centuries to improve English teaching. The first ELT curriculum reform occurred in 1997; further reforms to the program were implemented in 2005 as part of the government's initiative to align instruction with EU standards. The primary ELT curriculum was updated in 2005 by a team of national curriculum experts, incorporating other Western-derived educational methodologies and global trends. These changes significantly transformed classroom pedagogy by integrating a constructivist approach and strengthening the communicative dimension of language acquisition. It was an effort to align Türkiye's ELT curriculum with the EU's language education criteria.

Kırkgöz (2007) emphasizes that along with the new curriculum in 2005, the length of education in all secondary schools was also increased from three to four years, and English language instruction was broadened throughout

the curriculum, in order to guarantee consistency in ELT across all kinds of schools.

Koç et al. (2007) state that a shared set of principles consisting of four components—social, individual, economic, and historical and cultural elements—guides the design of the curriculum for each course. Additionally, it is suggested that the Ministry of National Education values the individuality of each pupil in addition to their cultural and social origins. The goal of the curriculum reform is to enhance both the social and personality development of the children.

Another major shift in terms of the English curriculum in Türkiye occurred in 2013. Aksoy (2020) reported in his study that The Ministry of National Education created and implemented a new foreign language curriculum for the 2013–2014 school year. Formerly, most students viewed English as an academic pre-requisite and couldn't use it as a tool of communication. Therefore, the curriculum's focus was on creating a connection between the materials and students' everyday experiences.

Yaman (2018) stated that the introduction of the revised curriculum in 2013 resulted in the commencement of English instruction from the second grade onwards. Within the principles of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, a communicative and action-oriented approach was preferred. In 2018, a new framework was developed in the line with the philosophy and principle of the previous one, maintaining the primary goal of English language education as using the language for communication. This revision, however, a values education component was incorporated into the curriculum, and was informed by the input of diverse stakeholders, including English teachers, universities, and civil society organizations.

Gel and Kuyumcu Vardar (2021) mentioned in their research that the curricula implemented between 2014 and 2017 primarily emphasized communicative themes. Four language abilities, fundamental functions to be learned, grammar, and all required materials are included in each unit of the curriculum. Furthermore, it is mentioned that the CEFR descriptors are used as a guide.

### **Testing and Assessment of Language and Reading Skill**

A test is a tool used for evaluating an individual's performance, knowledge, or ability within a specific domain. As a systematic method of assessment, it must accurately measure the targeted construct, whether related to ability, knowledge or performance. In the case of a proficiency test, that domain assessed is the individual's general competence across all language skills. In contrast,

assessment is a continuous process that encompasses a much broader scope of factors. During the teaching process, the teacher continuously evaluates each student's performance whenever a student answers a question, makes a comment, or attempts to use a new word or structure. As a broader concept, assessment encompasses various forms of evaluation, of which tests constitute only one component (Brown, 2003).

Bachman and Palmer (2010) claim that what is being assessed depends on the program's content, the objectives given in a syllabus, the content given in the coursebooks, materials and the activities used for teaching and learning. All of these elements provide us with what is going to be used for the language assessment in the course. In addition to this idea, how the content taught will be assessed should also be associated with how we're teaching it. The way in which something is taught provides a foundation for designing the assessment component.

In their book "Language assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices", Brown and Abeywickrama (2018) list practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity and washback as principles of language assessment. The logistical, practical, and administrative challenges associated with creating, administering, and grading an assessment tool are referred to as practicality. Authenticity is the extent to which a given language test task's characteristics match those of a target language task. Washback refers to the testing's effect on the educational process. Reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of a test, indicating the extent to which it yields similar results when administered to the same student or to comparable students on two different occasions. Reliability concerns might come from the test itself, the rater, the student, or the test's administration. Validity is perhaps the most crucial factor and the most complicated requirement for an effective test. It refers to the extent to which a test measures what it is intended to measure. For example, in the case of reading skills, a valid reading test should assess actual reading ability rather than unrelated factors such as perfect eyesight or prior knowledge of the material. There are different types of validity we can use to explore the validity of a test in detail. These types of validity examines validity from different perspectives such as content validity, criterion-related validity, construct validity, consequential validity and face validity.

The principles do not inherently account for each other. According to Razi (2012), a reading test may demonstrate reliability; yet, if it predominantly assesses grammatical knowledge via fill-in-the blanks items, it fails to achieve validity in measuring reading comprehension.

Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) emphasized that reading is one of the most essential skills students should acquire. Students engage in reading for various purposes, including both entertainment and the pursuit of information. It supports EFL students to become more linguistically proficient and acquainted with the topics in their educational programs.

Green (2021) points out the fundamental challenge in assessing comprehension: it can't be observed directly. Simply watching someone read a report or listen to a news broadcast provides no conclusive evidence about their level of understanding. To determine the extent to which a language learner has understood, assessment designers must elicit evidence of receptive language processing by requiring the learner to perform an additional task beyond merely reading or listening. The additional task mentioned could be acting, sketching, speaking, or writing. Green (2021) also claims that we frequently combine various forms of reading to accomplish our aims. The types of reading such as fast reading, scanning, search reading and skimming, differ in certain aspects, which in turn influence how they are assessed. When scanning, the reader looks for particular words or phrases. In search reading, the reader has something more in mind than simply one or two key words or phrases since they are searching for concepts related to a particular subject. In search reading, information finding is typically a preparatory phase, but in scanning, discovering the important information typically signals the end of the reading process. There is a local focus when it comes to scanning and search reading which is on specific textual elements, such as words, phrases, or sentences. In contrast, the reader's goal is to grasp the gist—a concise yet comprehensive summary of a long book in skimming. In order to provide a broad overview, this may entail selecting a few crucial components (such as chapter titles, introduction and conclusion paragraphs, images, first phrases of paragraphs.). By skimming, the reader can read more quickly. It is recommended assessors to be precise regarding the goal of measurement in a particular setting and choose or design tests that meet the goal. In terms of the standpoints of cognition and development, it is crucial to take into traits of test-takers, as the causes of individual variances evolve with time. For example, inferencing is typically more significant for older and more proficient readers, whereas decoding is essential for younger and less experienced readers.

To classify reading objectives in terms of cognitive processes required to achieve them, Bloom's Revised Taxonomy can serve as an appropriate framework. Originally created for general educational reasons, Bloom's taxonomy is a classification system for learning objectives

(Larsen et al., 2022). In the original taxonomy, there were six categories: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. The categories were arranged from concrete to abstract and from simple to complex. In the revised taxonomy, the Knowledge category is called Remember, the Comprehension category is named Understand, the Synthesis category is renamed as Create and moved to the top category, and the remaining categories are Apply, Analyze, and Evaluate (Krathwohl, 2002).

In a research about reading comprehension carried out by Dagostino et al. (2014) in Malaysia, Bloom's Revised Taxonomy was used as a classification system, and thus, the researchers were able to determine more precisely which particular cognitive abilities were being evaluated for each test item. They found the use of revised taxonomy significant because, unlike most current reading comprehension tests, it provided a structured set of objectives for categorizing the learning, teaching, and assessment within the cognitive domain- an element that is fundamental to instruction across most subject areas.

A variety of research related to coursebooks were conducted in the literature. Focusing on reading comprehension, Ulum (2021) analyzed an EFL coursebook and presented how reading questions ranked in terms of cognitive levels in Bloom's revised taxonomy. Kasimi (2022) used descriptive content analysis with Bloom's revised taxonomy to analyze reading comprehension questions in a coursebook and recommended that future research can focus on to what extent higher cognitive skills are included into the curriculum regarding reading questions.

In a Chinese context, Wu and Pei (2018) analyzed reading comprehension questions in three coursebooks used for the intensive reading course of English majors using a coding scheme based on Bloom's taxonomy and suggested that coursebooks should promote critical thinking and be compatible with the curriculum.

Another analysis of a coursebook has been done by Dallasheh (2024) in the Middle Eastern context and the results were similar to the previously mentioned studies as the results show that for the analyzed wh- questions, they are more linked with lower order skills than higher order ones.

Rebla and Büyükahıska (2023), on the other hand, conducted a research using Bloom's revised taxonomy to evaluate reading questions in a 7th grade English coursebook published by Turkish Ministry of National Education. Results of the research showed that lower-level cognitive skills were more dominant than the higher ones. They concluded that the coursebook failed to achieve

critical thinking because questions that assessed higher level skills were limited and not enough for the development of critical thinking.

Another study which was aimed to determine the extent to which reading parts of EFL textbooks written for Turkish high school students incorporated the revised version of Bloom's taxonomy was carried out by Köksal et al. (2023). The research's findings indicated that the assessed materials lacked the higher order cognitive skills listed in the revised version of Bloom's taxonomy.

### **Assessment of EFL in Türkiye**

Assessment and learning are strongly interrelated in terms of theory and practice. According to Tuzcu Eken (2021), the assessment process is viewed as a crucial component of education in Türkiye because an inconsistent evaluation could undermine all of the goals that have been set and accomplished. Since the CEFR serves as the foundation for the new language education curriculum, process-oriented and alternative assessment methods are generally advised. One idea for foreign language evaluation in Türkiye is that similar to international examinations like the TOEFL and IELTS, which demand that students concentrate on learning English, students may be held responsible for every English skill in the national exams.

Large-scale exams play a crucial role in the Turkish education system. However, when we review the English curriculum and its focus on the teaching of the four skills, we can see that the large-scale exams do not match this focus. There are many alternative assessment methods such as portfolios, blogs, vlogs, podcasts, roleplays, case-studies for the testing of speaking, listening, reading and writing but large-scale exams as well as in-school exams may still be carried out using test-based exams. According to Altan (2017), test-based language assessment is doomed to failure, dissatisfaction, and ultimately, fruitlessness. There are numerous tools available in language classrooms for evaluating pupils, including both formal and informal evaluations. Language teachers should be capable of coming up with efficient methods for figuring out what and how much their pupils are learning. It should be possible for teachers to evaluate what sorts of assessments best serve their educational goals and language should be assessed the way it is taught.

Kirkgöz (2007) emphasizes the importance of developing students' communicative competence in English, identifying it as a key factor driving significant changes in testing and evaluation practices. Conventional "pen and paper" exams, which were widely used in Turkish state elementary schools, are no longer regarded as suitable

instruments for assessment. Rather, the use of portfolios for performance-based assessment is suggested, as it is thought to be more in line with the principles of communicative language instruction.

Further findings in a research carried out by Gürel and Demirhan İçsan (2020) show that due to the lower student-teacher ratio in private schools, teachers were able to employ both individualized assessment methods and the curriculum's assessment tools, such as e-portfolios. Teachers working in public schools, however, claimed they only utilized paper and pencil exams with the rare practical assessment instead of apps like video blogs and e-portfolios.

Whereas their primary focus is not on the assessment of language skills, numerous studies in the literature examine reading skills and Bloom's revised taxonomy. Widiāna et al. (2023) conducted an experimental research to focus on the links between Bloom's revised taxonomy-oriented learning activities with reading interest and creative thinking skills and found that such activities increased both the interest and critical thinking skills. Another study by Neldis et al. (2024) looked at how English teachers created questions based on Bloom's revised taxonomy and underlined that using higher order cognitive skills from the taxonomy could mean that students will be motivated to study English. Following the theme of assessment, Baghei et al. (2020) stated that content analysis of questions related to their cognitive complexity has attracted increasing attention.

Additionally, the literature includes some studies directly addressing the topic of reading assessment. For example, in an Indonesian context, Laila and Fitriyah (2022) analyzed reading questions in a textbook using Bloom's revised taxonomy. In the Turkish context, Çimen (2022) explored the assessment of EFL reading, while other research has examined assessment and reading comprehension in Philippines and New Zealand contexts, respectively (Abejuela et al., 2023; Fjørtoft, 2024). However, there is still a lack of research related to the analysis of reading assessment questions published by the Turkish Ministry of Education. Starting from 2023-2024 academic year, the high school assessment practices moved towards a curriculum related approach. As teachers are recently obligated to construct exam items in accordance with the objectives specified in the curriculum, each item is linked with objectives articulated through verbs that assess distinct cognitive skill. Therefore, the present study analyzing the reading example questions provided by the Ministry of Education in Türkiye using Bloom's Revised Taxonomy as the framework is expected to contribute to the literature by giving further insight to the current

reading assessment practices in the Turkish context. Moreover, the current study, by interpreting the compatibility of testing questions with the curriculum's behavioral objectives and introducing the distribution of cognitive challenge of activities through grades, aims to serve for cognitive processes students go through during their high-school life.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to explore the compatibility between the learning objectives and reading questions provided by the Ministry of National Education through the use of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy as a framework to conduct a thematic analysis. The following will be analyzed in order to achieve this purpose:

- To which level of the taxonomy does each learning objective correspond?
- How do the objectives and cognitive levels progress through different levels (9th-12th grade)?
- How compatible are the objectives and questions?

### **Method**

#### **Research Model**

Qualitative research is highly valuable in the field of ELT and Applied Linguistics as it provides in-depth insights into the teaching and learning of language (Pandey, 2025). The present research is based on a qualitative model as it includes document analysis, which is a method based on gathering empirical data in a manner that is unobstructive and nonreactive as well as low-cost (Bowen, 2009). Descriptive content analysis was used for the analysis of the collected data. Content analysis collects texts, and analyses, breaks down and examines them into a summary form using both emerging themes and pre-existing categories (Cohen et al., 2007). Before the analysis of the data, levels of cognitive skills from Bloom's taxonomy were chosen as categories for the classification of objectives. In terms of compatibility between questions and objectives, there were the categories of Compatible, Partially Compatible and Not Compatible before the analysis of the data. After the analysis, the code of Doesn't Assess Reading emerged as a new category. In content analysis, the importance of specific concepts or meanings in a document is determined by how frequently a given item is used and how many contexts it appears in (Jupp, 2006). The present study analyzes and interprets the data based on frequency of each cognitive level in objectives, questions categorized according to their compatibility with objectives, and their distributions for different grades of high school level.

### **Data Sources of the Research**

The data sources for this research comprised the first and second English exam scenarios and example questions of the first semester for all high school grade levels, as published by the Ministry of National Education of Türkiye.

### **Data Collection Tool**

The documents analyzed in the research were found online and they were open access. They were taken from Ministry of Education's website. All of the documents analyzed included the example reading questions along with the learning objectives, which the questions are meant to assess.

All of the data was analyzed and discussed by both of the researchers in order to reach an accurate conclusion.

The ethical process in the study was as follows:

- Ethics committee waiver was obtained from Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Date: 05.06.2024, Number: E-74555795-050.04-1007142)
- No participant is included in the research.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of the data for this qualitative research follows steps from Creswell (2009).

Step one includes the preparation of data for analysis. For this step, all the documents to be analyzed were downloaded and saved in a file. Then only the reading example questions from 9th to 12th grade were extracted from the documents and they were transferred to different documents. After organizing the questions, the objectives stated above were extracted and compiled into a separate file to identify the levels at which each objective was addressed.

For the second step all the data must be read to get a general idea of the content. Thus, all the data were read to get an overall understanding of how objectives and reading questions were given in the examples.

Third step marks the beginning of the coding process. In this process, the behavioral objectives were read and action verbs in the objectives were highlighted and put in a table to see how the action verbs progressed through different levels, how many times and at which level each verb occurred. Then, cognitive processes and their descriptions were obtained from an article by Krathwohl (2002) which further explores the revised version of Bloom's taxonomy (See Figure 1). The cognitive processes and their descriptions were used as a framework to categorize the objectives into their categories of cognitive



functions. Although the levels included example verbs for cognitive processing, like recognizing and recalling under “remember” or inferring and comparing under “understand”, they were not taken into consideration as each example verb may not directly fall under the same category for reading comprehension. For example, in the taxonomy, the verb “*summarizing*” is given under the level of “understand”. But if students are analyzing a short story to summarize it, this means that students will go through higher levels of processing than just determining the meaning of written messages as they will compare parts of a story and make decisions on what and what not to include in their summary. Therefore, only cognitive processes and their descriptions of what each process means were used. A similar coding process was applied for the sample questions of reading. They were coded by looking at the objective that was given for the question, its level at the taxonomy and then analyzing the question to see if it is at the level of the given objective to determine the level of compatibility.

**Figure 1.**

*Cognitive Process Levels and Their Descriptions*



For step four, the researcher needs to determine the themes that emerge from the analysis of the data. The coding process was used to determine the compatibility between the objectives' levels at the taxonomy and the example reading questions given. There were four themes emerging from the analysis of the documents: “Reading Questions That Are Compatible with the Objectives”, “Reading Questions That Are Partially Compatible with the Objectives”, “Reading Questions That Aren't Compatible with the Objectives” and “Questions that Don't Assess Reading”. Different files were created for each theme, and the example questions were separated accordingly.

For step five, the process of describing the themes in the narrative is supposed to be carried out. It was determined that each theme emerging from the research findings

would be explained for each grade level, accompanied by descriptions of example questions and an analysis of their alignment with the objectives in terms of their compatibility. Tables were also used in order to summarize and give an overall picture of the data.

For step six, interpretation of the data is conducted. The data was interpreted in terms of how these findings can help us understand the different cognitive processing levels represented in the documents and how they were distributed across grades 9 to 12 and the extent to which the reading questions assessed what the objectives were intended to measure.

## Results

In the documents, 9th grade has twelve, 10th grade has ten, 11th grade has nine and 12th grade has thirteen example reading questions. In total, 44 questions were analyzed. The layout given in the documents is consistent across all grades, with each objective followed by an example question designed to assess it. However, in some cases, the same objectives are associated with different questions. For example, in the 9th Grade, the objective “E9.1.R1. Students will be able to recognize familiar names, words and very basic phrases in simple texts such as postcards, greeting cards and emails.” is given for three different questions. This is the reason why there aren't 44 unique objectives. The number of unique objectives at each level are seven for 9th grade, six for 10th grade, seven for 11th grade and eight for 12th grade making it a total of 28 unique objectives.

### Learning Objectives and their Cognitive Level

The main verbs given in the objectives include: recognize, find, read, scan, identify, diagrammatize, skim, answer, paraphrase, order, analyze, infer, read (aloud), match and reorder. Based on the verbs alone, recognize, find, read, identify and match are categorized at the level of “remember” and scan, skim, paraphrase, and infer are at the level of “understand”. For “apply”, we can list the verbs: order, reorder and diagrammatize. Moving onto the three high levels of cognitive processing, the verb “analyze” belongs to the category of “analyze” and there are no verbs that can be categorized at the levels of “evaluate” and “create” at the first phase of coding process. However, after analyzing the objectives in detail, it was seen that in some of the objectives, although the main verb indicates one level in the taxonomy, the following words in the objective change their level in the taxonomy.

At the 9th grade level, the verb “find” was used in two different objectives. While one of the objectives focused on finding specific information, the other one focused on

finding the main idea. This meant that finding specific information stayed at the original cognitive category of the verb “*find*”, which was “*remember*”, while finding the main idea was moved to the “*understand*” level. In terms of the verb “*scan*”, it is normally placed at the “*understand*” level. However, in the task, students are expected to go through additional cognitive processes of evaluation and decision making where they would evaluate given film reviews. Therefore, the objective itself actually was accepted as the “*evaluate*” level. For the 10th Grade level objectives, the verb “*scan*” was followed by the task of filling in the timelines. To accomplish this, students are required to transfer the information provided into a different form, thereby placing the objective at the “*apply*” level. Another change at this level is the verb “*identify*” given in two different forms: identify specific information and identify the differences. For the former one, students are at the “*remember*” level, searching for specific words to answer the questions while for the latter, there is a need for analyzing which elements are related and which are not, in order to identify the differences, thereby elevating the task to the “*analyze*” level. Lastly, for skimming to draw a conclusion, students need to read to get the gist but drawing a conclusion means that they are also required to make judgements and check what the text actually leads up which takes an objective with the main verb “*skim*” to the “*evaluate*” level. For the 11th Grade, the verb “*find*” means that students are expected to find information but as the objective requires them to find the main idea, they need to understand the whole text which takes it one level higher to “*understand*”. The verb “*identify*” is similar at the “*remember*” level, but identifying thesis statements and topic sentences means that students need to read the text, see how parts relate to each other to figure out these elements which makes it belong to the “*analyze*” category in the cognitive process. Another verb included in the objectives is “*analyze*” which would typically correspond to the “*analyze*” level. However, as the objective requires students to analyze a short story in order to summarize it, the task moves one level higher; summarizing entails deciding which parts of a story to include, thereby placing it at the “*evaluate*” level. Lastly at the 12th grade, the verb “*find*” which was initially at the “*remember*” level is changed completely because while one objective requires students to find the supporting ideas which means that it is on the “*understand*” level and finding irrelevant content being the other one means analyzing how parts relate or not which takes the objective to the “*analyze*” level. For the last one, identifying main conclusions in argumentative texts was categorized as “*evaluate*” since there will be argumentative texts and students need to make judgments based on the arguments in order to reach a conclusion.

The verb “*answer*” is not categorized in the sense that answering may mean different level of cognitive processing for different questions asked. Lastly, the verb “*read*” was not categorized because only the topic of what the students will read was given and there were no additional verbs along with reading in the objectives.

The following table shows the cognitive processes and how many objectives are given for each level.

**Table 1.**  
*The Number of Objectives and Their Cognitive Levels*

	Total
Remember	8
Understand	6
Apply	4
Analyze	4
Evaluate	4
Create	0
Not Categorized	2

### **Progression of Objectives and Cognitive Levels Through the Grades**

For the 9th grade level, four of the seven objectives are at the first level, “*remember*”. There are two objectives at the “*understand*” level and there is one objective at the Evaluate level. If we look at it from the higher and lower perspectives of the taxonomy, six out of seven objectives are at the lower two levels of “*remember*” and “*understand*”.

At 10th grade, there is one objective at “*remember*”, two objectives at the “*apply*”, one objective at “*analyze*”, one objective at the “*evaluate*” level and one objective that was not categorized. From the lower categories in the taxonomy, there are three objectives and from the higher categories, there are two objectives.

At 11th grade, there is one objective at “*remember*”, one objective at “*apply*”, one objective at “*analyze*”, one objective at “*evaluate*” and two objectives at the “*understand*” level. There are three objectives at the lower three levels of “*remember*”, “*understand*” and “*apply*” and two objectives at higher levels of “*analyze*” and “*evaluate*”.

Lastly at 12th grade, there are two objectives at “*remember*”, two objectives at “*understand*”, two objectives at “*analyze*”, one objective at “*apply*” and another one at “*evaluate*” level. There are five objectives from the lower half of “*remember*”, “*understand*” and “*apply*” levels while three objectives from “*analyze*” and “*evaluate*” levels.

Overall, there are eighteen objectives in total from the lower levels of “*remember*”, “*understand*” and “*apply*” and eight from the higher levels of “*analyze*” and “*evaluate*”.

There are no objectives that are categorized in the “create” level. If we look at the progression beginning from 9th grade to 12th grade, we can see the different levels given through the grades (See Table 2). The objective count is higher at the level of “remember” and “understand” for 9th Grade and moving on to 10th grade, there is a move towards “apply”, “analyze” and “evaluate” levels. At 11th grade, there’s almost an even distribution of the levels and we can see at least one objective from each level. Lastly in 12th grade, the distribution is similar to that of the 11th grade in that it is almost even. However, the number of objectives at the lower levels increases compared to 11th grade, with four objectives falling under “remember” and “understand” levels for 12th grade.

**Table 2.**

*Progression of Objectives Through Grades*

	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade
Remember	4	1	1	2
Understand	2		2	2
Apply		2	1	1
Analyze		1	1	2
Evaluate	1	1	1	1
Create				
Not Categorized		1	1	

### The Compatibility Between Objectives and Questions

There is one question at the 9th grade level which doesn’t assess the reading skill. In the objective given for the question, it says that students will be able to read a simple text for simple information. In this question, the instructions require students to fill in the blanks with names of public buildings and a set of sentences provided beneath the instructions. An example sentence is “People go to the ..... to buy medicine.” For reading tasks, students read sentences, paragraphs, texts, essays in order to do another action based on what they’ve read. Although the objective says that they will read a text for specific information, the question does not include a text. If we look at the question, it requires students to fill in the blanks with vocabulary they will recall from memory, therefore this is not a reading task. As this question is not included, there are 43 reading questions that belong to one of the categories of: compatible, not compatible or partially compatible (See Table 3).

At the 9th grade level, nine out of eleven reading questions analyzed are compatible with their given objectives. These include questions given for objectives with recognizing, finding specific information, reading and scanning to find out. As an example, for a compatible question, we can give a question where the objective asks students to read a text for specific information about jobs, nationalities and countries. There is a postcard including a text written from Asia to John about Türkiye. In the text, she describes the city of Ankara, the popular places in Ankara, the food and the people. Following the text, the questions ask specific information related to it such as “Where did Asia visit in the city?” and “What kind of food did Asia try?”. This is a compatible question as finding specific information was categorized at the “remember” level and at this level and this question, students will retrieve information in order to answer questions.

At the 10th grade level, seven out of ten reading questions are compatible. One of the compatible questions is a question that is given with an objective including “to answer” as a main verb. The question asks students to answer questions according to the text given about how life was in the past. The questions given for the text ask for specific information such as “Where did Leo use to play when he was a child?” and “What did Leo use to do in the library?”. Although the verb “answer” was not categorized at a cognitive level, the question given for the objective requires students to answer questions about short texts, we can say that the questions asked directly to assess how well they can recall information from the text, it is on the “remember” level and the objective and question are compatible.

At the 11th grade level, seven out of nine reading questions are compatible. A question containing the verb answer in its objective is also included among the compatible questions. Similar to the answer example from the 10th grade, it is classified at the “remember” level as it features a text about people’s past habits and experiences followed by questions requiring specific information explicitly stated in the text. An example for a compatible question is that there are events from Aziz Sancar’s life and students are asked to put them in order.

At the 12th grade level, eight out of thirteen reading questions are compatible. Two of the eight questions are identical, appearing in different exam scenarios; therefore, we can count them as one, resulting in seven unique compatible questions. An example of a compatible item is a question associated with the objective *find irrelevant content*. The question presents the learners four sentences that describe Sarah. While three of the sentences describe



her physical appearance, one of them describes her personality. Students are asked to find the irrelevant sentence which means analyzing how the sentences relate to one another and determining which one doesn't. This makes the objective at the *"analyze"* level and the question compatible.

For the questions that are incompatible with the stated objectives, it was seen that at the 9th grade level, one question does not align with its corresponding objective. In the question, the students are asked to firstly scan film reviews and then decide which movie to watch. This objective was categorized at the *"evaluate"* level in the taxonomy because decision making requires judgement of information. In the example question, the reviews are given and all of the options ask students to remember specific information such as who talks about a certain subject or how many people have negative comments, making the question and the objective incompatible. There are no decision-making processes in the question but only retrieving specific information about the reviews from memory.

At the 10th grade level, three questions are incompatible with the objectives. These questions are given with the same objective which requires students to skim a text in order to draw a conclusion. All of the questions follow a similar pattern: a text presents a person's future plans, and the accompanying questions ask about specific details of those plans. Remembering details is at the *"remember"* level in the taxonomy but drawing a conclusion is at the *"evaluate"* level as discussed before. There is no need for students to deduce information for conclusion; therefore these questions are incompatible with the objective.

At the 11th grade level, there is one question that is incompatible with the objective. The objective includes the process of analyzing to summarize which is at the *"evaluate"* level. The question includes a short story and learners are instructed to complete a table with plot, setting, characters and climax. Analyzing to summarize is a process which requires students to make decisions about which elements to include in a summary. By contrast, this question involves writing down elements from the story, where students simply read the story and complete the table rather than summarizing.

**Table 3.**

*The Compatibility Between Objectives and Questions Through Grades*

	C	PC	IC	DAR
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	9	1	1	1
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	7		3	
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	7	1	1	
12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	8		5	

*Abbreviations:* C, Compatible, PC, Partially Compatible, IC, Incompatible, DAR, Doesn't Assess Reading

At the 12th grade level, there are five incompatible questions. Three of these questions have the same objective which includes analyzing surveys/interviews to answer questions. These questions are very similar as they have a graphic table with a percentage or number of students who listen to different types of music, and the options include questions about the survey. An examination of the questions reveals that they ask about the most or equally popular song among students. These items do not require students to analyze the graphic tables; rather, they only involve reading the numbers to provide an answer, which reduces the cognitive demand to a level below *"analyze"*. The other two incompatible questions are linked to the objective of identifying main conclusions in argumentative texts. In both of the questions, there are three people having the same opinions but in one of the questions, there is one more person having an opinion about friendship. The set of questions includes one that asks students to identify the general topic of a conversation and another that requires them to locate specific information regarding who holds a particular opinion. The objective, however, is defined as identifying conclusions in argumentative texts, entails evaluating statements from multiple perspectives in order to reach a conclusion. In contrast, this question operates at the lower cognitive levels of *"remember"* and *"understand"* rather than at the objective's intended *"evaluate"* level.

Lastly, there are partially compatible questions, one of which appears at 9th grade. The objective given for the question says that students require to find the main idea which is an objective at the *"understand"* level. In the question, there's a dialogue between two people following three questions. The first one, *"What are Brian and Rose talking about?"* corresponds to the *"understand"* level, as it requires identifying the main idea. In contrast, the other two questions, asking about the genre of movie Rose prefers and the time they're going to the cinema, require recalling specific details, thereby placing them at the *"remember"* level.

Another partially compatible question is at the 11th grade level. The objective requires students to identify the main idea of a text which was categorized at the “understand” level in the revised taxonomy. In the question, there is a text, and learners are instructed to read the text and answer the questions. The text is on Steve Jobs’s life. There are three questions given under the text. The first one is compatible with the objective “What is the text about?”. However, there are two more questions which require specific information by asking when he was born and what his profession was. Therefore, we can say that while the first question is at the “understand” level, the other two are at the “remember” level and the example question is partially compatible with the objective given.

Since the number of compatible questions are higher at every grade level, Table 4 provides a detailed overview of how these questions are distributed across grades in terms of their cognitive levels, as aligned with the corresponding objectives.

**Table 4.**  
*Cognitive level of compatibility through grades*

	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade
Remember	8	4	4	2
Understand	1		1	2
Apply		2	1	1
Analyze		1	1	3
Evaluate				
Create				

**Discussion**

In the literature, the studies on the skill of reading are centered around the topics of textbook activities and reading questions, objectives of reading courses for various levels, assessment of reading skill and the relationship of reading skill with the development of some other skills such as critical thinking and problem solving (Gerez Taşgın & Taşgın, 2023; Şara Hürsoy & Karadedeli, 2022) as well as the attitudes of learners in other fields of learning (Arslan, 2023).

As in the present study, Bloom’s taxonomy is a widely applied framework in research on reading skill (Baghaei et al., 2020; Güven & Yaşartürk, 2025; Sönmez, 2019). The results of the study show that the learning objectives, when

classified according to cognitive levels in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy, don’t follow a developmental progression from 9th grade to 12th grade. Lower-level objectives exist more on the 9th grade level; however, they are more evenly distributed across the other grades. While 10th grade shows a progression towards higher levels of “apply”, “analyze” and “evaluate”, this progression does not continue on the higher levels for the 11th grade. Instead, there is an even distribution of levels. For the 12th grade, there is no progression to higher levels from the 11th grade but a similar distribution with even more objectives at “remember” and “understand” levels. While students’ both cognitive capacity to process information and their language proficiency increase with age, this increase is not adequately reflected in the assessment of reading. This result partly collides with the study by Güven and Yaşartürk (2025) who reported that teachers tend to ask slightly higher-order questions as students advance through grade levels.

The compatible questions outnumber the incompatible ones in relation to the objectives, which indicates that the aim of assessing reading skills can largely be accomplished through these questions. However, the questions that are not aligned with the objectives may raise validity concerns, as they fail to measure what they are intended to assess. As Fjortorft et al. (2024) highlighted in their qualitative content analysis study, such mismatches may prevent reading assessments from effectively improving learners’ reading skills even though both policymakers and teachers express a willingness to support improvement in reading comprehension and literacy skills. The objective specifies what a question is intended to assess, and the question itself should reflect this aim. However, when incompatibility arises between the objective and the question, students may still answer the question without actually reaching the intended cognitive level. For example, one objective required students “to scan to decide”, which implies making use of the input, forming judgements about it and stating a personal decision. Yet, the corresponding task only provided the input and asked students to recall specific details, thereby reducing the cognitive demand to the “remember” level in the revised taxonomy. An examination of the incompatible questions with their objectives-found across all grades’ levels-shows that they were classified as such because they failed to assess higher-order cognitive skills required by the objectives. All of the questions were at a lower level, some moving down one level and some moving multiple levels at the revised taxonomy. This means that although we see higher cognitive levels in the objectives, the questions given for

them couldn't maintain them, which means that there's a gap in the assessment of higher-level cognitive skills. A similar finding reported by Lestari and Pratola (2024) found that the final examination questions in private junior Indonesian high-schools tests predominantly tested students' lower-level skills, in contrast to Indonesian education policies and objectives that emphasized higher-order cognitive processing. Moreover, such inconsistencies have been shown to undermine the reliability of exams (Özen & Mert, 2024).

The results of the present study are similar to other studies (Dallaseh, 2024; Kasimi, 2022; Köksal et al., 2023; Laila & Fitriyah, 2022; Maryamah et al., 2024; Ulum, 2022; Ulum, 2024; Wu & Pei, 2018) in terms of lower cognitive levels outnumbering the higher ones (See Table 1). In their studies, the textbooks included more reading comprehension questions that assessed the lower-level thinking skills than questions that assessed the high-level thinking skills of the taxonomy. It is also mentioned in the aforementioned studies that an equal distribution of the high and low levels would be better, which is an idea that can also apply to this study, as an equal distribution of the levels would have a positive effect on the assessment process overall by not just focusing on recalling but also helping students' critical thinking skills. On the other hand, Qasrawi and Andelrahman (2020) compared the objectives of two editions of a coursebook and found that there is an increase in cognitive level of objectives including synthesis in the second edition, and the coursebooks aim to enhance both lower and higher order cognitive processing skills in contrast to the results of Adli and Mahmoudi (2017) who have found that advance level coursebooks included less demanding reading questions neglecting higher-order questions. Two other studies also show diverse results from our study with the result that coursebooks include both cognitive levels of lower and higher orders (Kamil et al., 2024; Sucipto & Cahyo, 2019).

Echoing other studies (Rebla & Büyükahıskı, 2023; Mayor, 2024; Widiana et al., 2023; Wu & Pei, 2018), higher level cognitive skills can be linked with critical thinking. Therefore, a lack of higher-level cognitive skills in practiced materials in the language learning context may mean that learners will not have opportunities to develop their critical thinking skills.

There were no objectives given which were on the level of *"create"*. *"Create"* is the highest level in the taxonomy and even at the highest level of secondary education, there are no objectives or example questions that require students to create something original after reading. This is significant, as the curriculum over the years has shifted toward a communicative use of language, enabling

students to interact with people in real-life contexts. For example, students may read the news and report it to someone or read a book and write a review- both of which involve creation. Since creation plays a central role in the everyday use of language, there is a clear need for creation-based objectives and tasks in reading assessment. A similar suggestion for more equitable distribution of reading competency was made in the context of Philippines at the conclusion of a qualitative study conducted by Abejuela et al. (2023).

Another issue is that the questions given are example questions to guide practicing teachers in Türkiye on how they can assess reading. As the teachers have to take a certain number of objectives and create questions for each exam, they may use these questions as samples to create their own questions. The incompatible questions with the objectives may mislead the teachers for reading assessment. In the research conducted by Çimen (2022), it is stated that there is a mismatch between the curriculum and teachers' practices in terms of assessment. It is found that teachers assess language knowledge rather than focusing on the suggestions of the curriculum, one of which is using production focused activities for assessment. Bearing this in mind, teachers who will create reading questions should also focus more on questions where students will produce meaningful content rather than solely use the correct forms or vocabulary. Thus, students can use higher cognitive skills more than the lower ones.

Another issue highlighted by Neldis et al. (2024) is that lack of questions assessing higher level cognitive skills may reduce students' motivation to study English. Within the scope of the present study, the fact that the example questions can serve as a guide for teachers in designing reading assessment tasks raises a concern: teachers may adopt a similarly lower cognitive focus. This, in turn, could negatively affect students' motivation to learn English as they progress through grade levels.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

While assessing the reading skill at the high school level, the example questions taken from the documents published by the Ministry of Education had more questions that were compatible with their objectives than incompatible ones. The cognitive processes from 9th to 12th grade showed an upward trend, with objectives demanding higher-level skills from 9th to 10th grade; however, the distribution of cognitive levels became more balanced at 11th and 12th grades. Yet, the incompatible questions demonstrated that the assessment of higher-level skills was unsuccessful as the items with the objectives predominantly required lower-level cognitive

skills. This result aligns with studies that analyzed the reading sections of textbooks and similarly reported a lack of higher-order cognitive skills (Dallasheh, 2024; Kasimi, 2022; Köksal et al., 2023; Rebla & Büyükahiska, 2023; Ulum, 2021; Wu & Pei, 2018).

This research focused exclusively on the objectives in terms of their placement within the revised taxonomy and examined whether the questions are compatible with these cognitive levels. The assessment of reading is a complex process, and the questions can be analyzed further using different processes or elements of the process for a better understanding of the validity. The analysis of inference questions, for instance, even could provide fruitful results on the assessment of reading comprehension. Rice et al. (2023) conducted a systemic review and specifically studied inference as a cognitive skill in reading comprehension and assessment of reading. Therefore, the compatibility of the questions with the objectives may change based on other criteria or framework used to analyze the same questions. There are also various elements that were not included in the research such as types of texts given in the questions and/or the objectives, themes surrounding the questions, length of the texts, types of reading the questions require and more, all of which can be the starting point of further research on the sample documents analyzed. On the other hand, compatibility studies of curricula could become stronger if they are conducted in real contexts of learning and teaching not only with assessment documents but also with learning and teaching practices as Green (2021) points out that comprehension is a complicated process to be observed and assessed.

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