

READING COMPREHENSION DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY THE FIRST-GRADE STUDENTS OF SMAN 5 PALU

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to identify the difficulties faced by the tenth-grade students of SMAN 5 Palu and the factors causing the students' difficulties in comprehending English reading text. This research is mixed method research. The subject of research was the tenth-grade students of SMAN 5 Palu. The techniques for collecting the data are interviews and tests. The researchers present the data from the difficulties in comprehending English reading text. The result of the research shows that 13, 33% of students have difficulties in understanding to look for the text's central idea, with an incorrect total of 8. Then, 41, 67% of students have difficulties in understanding vocabulary of the text, with the total of incorrect is 25. Then, there are 8, 33% of students who have difficulties in understanding to look for the detail information of the text, with the total incorrect is 5. Next, there are 36, 67% of students who have difficulties in understanding making inferences of the text with the total of incorrect is 22. The factors causing the students difficulties in comprehending English reading text are difficulty in understanding long sentences in the text, lack of interest reading, difficulty in understanding vocabulary, house environment and school environment.

Keywords: Reading Comprehension; Difficulties

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the four language skills taught in the English language learning process besides speaking, listening, and writing. Reading is the basic skill of all learning. People will do some activities by reading everywhere, and even some words, sentences, or passages are read. By reading, people gain information, knowledge, and some idea. By mastering reading skills, people who want to study English will find a fact that reading can bring to the improvement of their English skills. In the reading process itself need the cognitive process to comprehend the text. Comprehending the text is a more fundamental component in reading than other components like vocabulary, background knowledge, and reading strategy

Celce-Murcia (1991:195) stated that “reading has become one of the primary curricular concerns in the second and foreign language program”. It has become a curricular concern of language programs in Indonesia because reading is one of the English language skills. In Indonesia, English has been taught as the first foreign language that must be learned and understood because almost all science and technology is written in English.

The Indonesian government decided English as the first foreign language, which must be taught from elementary schools to universities, and even English begins to be taught to elementary school students as local content. In achieving curriculum goals, teachers and students face many problems, meaning that so far, the curriculum goals have not been achieved. It can be seen that many students who have completed high school cannot use English for communication both orally and in writing.

However, students' reading abilities remain low in reality. This is demonstrated by the fact that students find it difficult to comprehend the text of a reading book due to their low reading comprehension skills. “Reading comprehension is more than just identifying and understanding words and their meanings. It involves a more complex cognitive process where students could understand the meaning of written language, link it to their prior knowledge, and build up a mental representation of the information that they have read” (Takaloo & Ahmadi, 2017).

In this case, the students' use of skill communication become the main priority for the curriculum 2013 in term of communication purposes. Based on the description above, the researcher is interested in analyzing the difficulties of reading comprehension and the dominant difficulties that students face with the expectation that both the students and the teacher can use the result of this research to improve the English teaching and learning process.

METHOD

The researcher used a mixed method to conduct this study. Mixed-method research is an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms of research (Sugiyono, 2013). The researchers chose this method to find out the students' what difficulties are faced by students in comprehending English reading text and the factors contributing to the difficulties in comprehending English reading text.

Gay et al. (2006:9) asserted that “quantitative research is the collection and analysis of numerical data to explain, predict, and/or control phenomena of interest.” Specifically in

quantitative research, the researcher must state the hypotheses that could predict the results of the research before the study begins (Gay et al., 2006:18). Quantitative research involves studies that make use of statistical analyses to obtain their findings, require a degree of control and manipulation of phenomena control and the key features include formal and systematic measurement (Marczyk, DeMatteo, & Festinger, 2005; Cohen, Lawrence, & Keith, 2007).

On the other hand, Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006:399) explained that “qualitative research is the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data in order to gain insight into a particular phenomenon of interest”. Thus, in qualitative research, the researchers collect, analyze, and interpret data descriptively to capture the phenomenon of interest. The data for qualitative research will be collected by using instruments such as audio-visual data (videotape and photos) and documents (observation sheets, interviews, and questionnaires (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

In this research, the researcher used essay tests and interviews. The participants consist of 27 tenth-grade students of SMAN 5 Palu who have difficulties in reading comprehension. The researcher used (Sudijono, 1987: 20) formula to find the result of quantitative data and used Miles and Huberman (1994) data analysis technique, which consists of three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification to find the qualitative data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

At this point, the researcher will present the data analysis results in tests previously tested to students. The researcher collects 27 data. The type of the test which the students did was essay. The essay consisting of 5 questions where each question has a different aspect such as determining main idea, understanding vocabulary, and detail information.

Table 1 – Essay Questions

No	Question	Correct	Incorrect
1	What does the text tell about?	19	8
2	What did the writer do on the first day?	22	5
3	what is the main idea of paragraph one?	19	8
4	in sentence “It was called “Nazar” (paragraph 4). What does the bolded word refer to?	2	25
5	What can be inferred from the third paragraph?	5	22

Difficulties data are grouped in the table below

Table 2 – The Classification of Students' Difficulties

No.	Initial name	Main idea	Vocabulary	Detail information	Inference
1	APR	1	1	0	1
2	RM	0	1	0	1
3	AL	0	1	0	1
4	DIW	1	1	1	1
5	DR	1	1	1	1
6	AZM	0	1	0	1
7	MS	0	1	0	1
8	BG	0	0	0	0
9	MAS	1	1	1	1
10	DMY	1	1	0	1
11	AS	1	1	0	1
12	AMD	0	1	0	0
13	SD	1	1	1	1
14	NA	0	1	0	1
15	NS	0	1	0	1
16	TD	0	1	0	1
17	DYD	0	1	0	1
18	ER	0	1	0	1
19	ALX	0	1	0	1
20	ATN	0	0	0	1
21	IGR	0	1	0	1
22	HRY	1	1	1	1
23	KHI	0	1	0	0
24	ALF	0	1	0	1
25	RFD	0	1	0	1
26	RFA	0	1	0	0
27	JU	0	1	0	0
Total of each difficulty	8	25	5	22	
Total of all difficulties	60				

After collecting and, analyzing the data, there were 60 difficulties from students' reading recount text. Those 60 difficulties were classified into the following:

- a. Determining Main Idea = 8
- b. Understanding Vocabulary = 25
- c. Making Inference = 22
- d. Detail Information = 5

Those difficulties made by students were analyzed here. The researcher will put each incorrect answer based on the categories of Difficulties in Reading. The researcher calculates the frequency of difficulties by using Sudijono's formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

P = Percentage

F = Frequency of difficulties

N = Number of cases (total frequent)

The result of difficulties variety that students made can be seen in this table below:

Table 3 – Types of Difficulties, Frequency and Percentage

No	Types of difficulty	Frequency	percentage
1	Determining main idea	8	13, 33%
2	Understanding vocabulary	25	41, 67%
3	Detail information	5	8, 33%
4	Making inference	22	36, 67%
Total		60	100%

After distributing and analyzing the data from the test, the researchers conducted an in-depth interview to gain more information about factors that contribute in students' difficulties in reading comprehension. The interviewee consists of 5 students. The interview was given for the students to answer the second research question, "Factors are contributing to the difficulties in comprehending English reading text". In this research, the researcher found five factors that cause students to have difficulties in reading: difficulty in understanding long sentences in the text, lack of interest in reading, difficulty in understanding vocabulary, house environment, and school environment.

This finding can be seen in the following data based on the student's interview:

Researcher: Jadi hambatan apa yang kamu dapatkan ketika belajar reading?

Student: hambatannya kalau menemukan kosa kata baru kak, tidak tau artinya. Terus biasanya juga dalam 1 kata itu banyak artinya bukan cuma 1 arti begitu kak. Terus banyak kosa kata yang baru yang belum pernah saya lihat,

The difficulties here happen when the student reads a text. They got difficult and stopped to find the meaning of the word and sometimes just ignored the word they didn't understand.

Researcher: Kalau baca buku Bahasa Inggris suka?

Student: tidak suka kak, tidak tau artinya, baca buku Bahasa Inggris pun cuma waktu pelajaran. Terus karena memang dari awal kosa kata udah sedikit, jadi kalau dapat teks berbahasa Inggris jadi malas bacanya.

The student read a few English-language text. The student's vocabulary did not grow, and the word became unfamiliar to them. Here, the lack of vocabulary causes students to be lazy to read and their reading interest is reduced.

When students could understand the text, they were reading, vocabulary had an important role. The students must master the understanding of vocabulary to comprehend the meaning of the words, sentences, and paragraphs as well as possible. It will be challenging for the students to comprehend the text's phrases without acquiring a wide variety of terminology

DISCUSSION

In this research, the researcher discussed the research finding covering the difficulties faced by the students and the factors of causing the students difficulties in comprehending English reading. The researcher took 27 students at tenth grade students of SMAN 5 Palu as the subject of the study. After categorizing the students score, the researcher concluded that SMAN 5 PALU students faced difficulty comprehending English reading. In this research, the researcher tried to identify the difficulties faced by the students in comprehending English reading thoroughly the mistake they had made on their test. The researcher also tried to identify the factors are contributing to the difficulties in comprehending English reading text with the interview from the students.

Then, the researcher found that there are 13, 33% the students who are difficulties in answering the main idea of the question items, there are 41, 67% students who difficulties in answering questions items to understand vocabulary, there are 8, 33% students who difficulties in answering question items to look for the detail information and there are 36, 67% students who difficulties in answering question items for making inference.

Based on Nuttal's theory. there are four aspects of reading comprehension which the students should comprehend a text well, such as determining the main idea, understanding vocabulary, made inference and detail information. These aspects are regarded as difficulties that the students encounter in comprehending the text but in this study, the researcher found two difficulties experienced by the student, that is: difficulty in understanding vocabulary, and difficult to make inferences.

The researcher used Rahim's theory to identify causing the students difficulty in comprehending English reading text. Rahim said that a variety of factor produces difficulties in reading comprehension, there are: Difficulty in understanding long sentence in the text, Lack interesting in reading, Difficulty in understanding vocabulary, House environment and School environment.

The students had difficulty in understanding long sentence in the text. It made the students in SMAN 5 Palu did not understand the meaning of the material or sentence, when they read the

text. When the students did not interest with the materials, it caused the students having difficulty in absorbing the materials. The students cannot understand the text because they do not know the word's meaning. The researcher found tenth grade students in SMAN 5 Palu knowledge about vocabulary is less. They needed to look for the meaning of the vocabulary in the dictionary.

Students have difficulties in reading comprehension is because of their lack of interest in reading. The students have limited reading habit, so they do not understand by learning English reading. like when getting reading learning to read long texts, ordinary students immediately ignore it. When students get reading class, they only understand the learning immediately and most of the students are only persuaded by the teacher.

Rahim said that the house environment is related to the learner's attitude toward reading, such as interest and motivation in reading and prior knowledge that the learner has known. They did not desire to read English text and were lazy to read the English text. Another factor is the students lack of motivation to learn reading. their parents as the main teachers at home also do not motivate learning English, including reading. They said that reading is boring. The students in SMAN 5 Palu mostly lacked prior knowledge in reading English text.

Besides of house environment, their school environment also affects students. Their school did not provide enough reading material for them, so they cannot learn reading well. Moreover, the students in SMAN 5 Palu also have a problem in their home. They said that they are lack of parental control in learning. Most of them did not have enough motivation from their parents to learn English.

CONCLUSION

Based on analyzed data, the students have problems looking for the Determining Main Idea, Understanding Vocabulary, Making Inference, and Detail Information. Then many students have difficulty in understanding the structure of the text. They have limited vocabulary. The students cannot understand the material. They do not understand when finding a long text. The students have the problem of visualizing the text or materials. From the interview data analysis, the researcher found five factors causing the students difficulties in comprehending English reading text. There are: Difficulties in Understanding Long Sentence in the Text, lack of interest reading, Difficulty in Understanding Vocabulary, House Environment, and School Environment.

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