

Students' Difficulties In Comprehending English Reading Text At SMP Methodist 9 Medan

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to discover the difficulties which the Eighth Grade Students of SMP Methodist 9 Medan face in comprehending English reading text and investigate the factors which cause the difficulties. This study used descriptive qualitative research design. The subjects of this study was one class of Eighth Grade students of SMP Methodist 9 Medan. This study used Reading Comprehension Test and Interview in collecting the data. The findings of this study showed that there were a total of 332 difficulties experienced by students in comprehending English reading text, they are (1) Students have a total of 67 difficulties in Determining Main Idea with a percentage of 20.2%. (2) Students have a total of 58 difficulties in Finding Detail Information with a percentage of 17.5%.

(3) Students have a total of 62 difficulties in Making Inference with a percentage of 18.7%. (4) Students have a total of 63 difficulties in Identifying Reference with a percentage of 18.9%. (5) Students have a total of 82 difficulties in Understanding Vocabulary with a percentage of 24.7%. Meanwhile, factors of students' difficulties in reading comprehension, namely: limited vocabulary knowledge, lack of fluency, lack of familiarity with the subject matter, the difficulty level of the text (readability), inadequate use of effective reading strategies, weak verbal reasoning, problems with processing information, and problems in recalling information after reading.

Keywords:

Students' difficulties, Reading comprehension.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most important ways to acquire information. For educational purposes, reading is important for expanding students' knowledge. (Jarrah and Salina, 2018). Nuttal (1982: 42) defined reading as an interpretation that has a meaning from printed or written verbal symbols. It means that reading is the result of the interaction between the perception of graphic symbols that represent a language and knowledge. In the reading activity, the readers have to catch the point or message of what they read (Anom & Dahler, 2018: 117). It indicates that comprehension is needed in the reading activity.

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand information in a text and constructing the meaning of the text appropriately (Grabe and Stoller, 2002). Students face the difficulties when students' do a process of comprehension in reading activity. According to Nuttal (1982), there are five aspects of reading comprehension which the

students should comprehend a text well, such as determining main idea, detail information, making inference, identifying reference and understanding vocabulary. These aspects are regarded as difficulties that the students encounter in comprehending the text.

Furthermore, many different factors contribute to the cause of students' difficulties in the understanding text. According to Westwood (2008), there are eight factors of students' difficulties in comprehending reading text, they are: limited vocabulary knowledge, lack of fluency, lack of familiarity with the subject matter, difficulty level of the text (readability), inadequate use of effective reading strategies, weak verbal reasoning, problems with processing information, and problems in recalling information after reading.

In English lessons, there are many types of texts which Junior High School students have to study. In this research, the researcher chose Descriptive Text because this text has been learnt by the eighth grade students in the second semester so they already know about Descriptive Text. In addition, five sessions are required to allocate time for the descriptive text in the syllabus. This showed that the Descriptive Text is very important for students to master, while students still difficult to comprehend the Descriptive Text.

Due to the importance of reading, the English curriculum in Junior High Schools expects students to understand the meaning of short functional texts from several types of texts. Based on the English syllabus, students are expected to be able to read and grasp the meaning of some simple descriptive texts about people, animals and things. In fact, students have difficulty in comprehending the reading text and facing various challenges outside the academic environment due to lack of reading, which leads to poor academic performance among students (Mundhe, 2015).

In addition, the result of the writer's preliminary study on January 28th, 2022 at SMP Methodist 9 Medan showed that in comprehending the descriptive text, the students found some difficulties when the teacher asks them about some information that do not purely mention in the text but still in the context. Students also had lack of vocabulary and it made them find difficulties in understanding the text. Another difficulty that is faced by the students is in finding the main idea of the text. Furthermore, it could be found that the factors of students' difficulties in reading and comprehending texts are the lack of fluency of the students and problems in recalling information after reading. Teacher and students said that reading the text is crucial related to learning English because text is dominant in the material and students' exercises.

There has been some research in the field which focused on students' difficulties in comprehending English reading text, such as research from abroad which is done by Hamza and Nur (2018) and research by William (2020). There are also some researches related with the students' difficulties in comprehending English reading text done in Indonesia namely research by Nurhidayah (2021), Hasibuan (2021) and Prayitno (2021).

In this research, the researcher will continue to analyze the difficulties in comprehending English reading text faced by Junior High School Students. Through this research, the researcher will try to solve that phenomenon which is still happening until now. The theories which used in this research are the theory from Nuttal (1982) and Westwood (2008). Based on previous explanation, it is very interested for the researcher to conducting a research entitled "Students' Difficulties in Comprehending English Reading Text at SMP Methodist 9 Medan" with the expectation that the result of this research can be used by both the students and the teacher in improving the English teaching and learning process, especially in reading skill.

METHOD

This research was conducted by using qualitative descriptive research. The descriptive qualitative design is appropriate with this research since it describes the difficulties in comprehending English reading texts among the students at SMP Methodist 9 Medan and the factors caused the difficulties. The data is taken from the result of students' reading comprehension test and also from the transcript of interview with the students. The sources of data that have supported this research come from one class in Eighth Grade students of SMP Methodist 9 Medan, which consisting of 30 students, 13 students were males and 17 students were females.

To achieve the objectives of this research, there were techniques for collecting data carried out by the researcher, namely reading comprehension test, and interview. Technique of analyzing data is very necessary part to find out how the results of research conducted by the researcher. In this research, the data that was analyzed based on the procedured by Miles and Huberman (2014:31), which included several procedures, namely: data condensation, data display and conclusion drawing.

RESULTS

After collecting and analyzing the data, there were 332 difficulties from students' reading test. Those 332 difficulties were classified into these following:

- a. Determining Main Idea = 67
- b. Finding Detail Information = 58
- c. Making Inference = 62
- d. Identifying Reference = 63
- e. Understanding Vocabulary = 82

There are thirty data collected by the researcher. The type of the test which was done by the students was 20 questions of multiple choices with four options such as a, b, c and d. The difficulties were determined from students' incorrect answer based on the categories of aspect in reading comprehension. The researcher calculated the percentage of difficulties by using Sudijono's formula:

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

Notes:

P = percentage of reading comprehension difficulties

F = the frequency of reading comprehension difficulties

N = the total number of all reading comprehension difficulties

Table 4.1 Types of Difficulties, Frequency, Percentage

No	Types of Difficulties	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Determining Main Idea	67	20.2%
2.	Finding Detail Information	58	17.5%
3.	Making Inference	62	18.7%
4.	Identifying Reference	63	18.9%
5.	Understanding Vocabulary	82	24.7%
Total		332	100%

Based on the results of the data analysis, there were a total of 332 difficulties experienced by students in comprehending English reading text, they are (1) Students have a total of 67 difficulties in Determining Main Idea with a percentage of 20.2%. (2) Students have a total of 58 difficulties in Finding Detail Information with a percentage of 17.5%. (3) Students have a total of 62 difficulties in Making Inference with a percentage of 18.7%. (4) Students have a total of 63 difficulties in Identifying Reference with a percentage of 18.9%. (5) Students have a total of 82 difficulties in Understanding Vocabulary with a percentage of 24.7%.

Meanwhile, factors of students' difficulties in reading comprehension, namely: limited vocabulary knowledge, lack of fluency, lack of familiarity with the subject matter, the difficulty level of the text (readability), inadequate use of effective reading strategies, weak verbal reasoning, problems with processing information, and problems in recalling information after reading.

This research involves Nuttal's theory (1982), which is used to analyze the first question contained in this research, which was about the difficulties do the Eighth Grade students of SMP Methodist 9 Medan face in comprehending English reading text. According to Nuttal (1982), there are five aspects as difficulties that the students encounter in comprehending the text, such as determining main idea, detail information, making inference, identifying reference and understanding vocabulary. Based on the results of students' reading comprehension test, in Determining Main Idea, students have a total of 67 difficulties with a percentage of 20.2%. Students faced the difficulties to find the main idea and comprehend the topic that is told in the text. The students faced the difficulties to see what the main idea of a passage is, and where the main idea is located. In addition, students chose the answer options where the sentence is found in the text, even though the sentence is not the main idea.

DISCUSSIONS

In Finding Detail Information, students have a total of 58 difficulties with a percentage of 17.5%. The students did not use scanning strategy to find the detail information or idea that was mentioned on the text because they have to translate sentence by sentence of the text which they read. Students faced the difficulties to see and distinguish between important and unimportant information in the text in order to find specific piece of information such as name, date, word or phrases, and references in the text. Then, in Making Inference, students have a total of 62 difficulties with a percentage of 18.7%. Students faced the difficulties to find the conclusion of the text, because the meaning of the statement is not written on the text.

In Identifying Reference, students have a total of 63 difficulties with a percentage of 18.9%. Students faced the difficulties to understand for what the pronouns in the sentences are used. Last, in the main difficulties namely understanding vocabulary, students have a total of 82 difficulties with a percentage of 24.7%. Students have lack of vocabularies so they faced the difficulties to find the meaning of difficult word on the text and find the suitable meaning of the word. Not only for answering question items with Understanding Vocabulary aspects, even students faced the difficulties in understanding the vocabulary which contained in the other given texts.

This research also involves theory of Westwood (2008), which focuses on the eight factors of students' difficulties in comprehending reading text, they are: limited vocabulary

knowledge, lack of fluency, lack of familiarity with the subject matter, the difficulty level of the text (readability), inadequate use of effective reading strategies, weak verbal reasoning, problems with processing information, and problems in recalling information after reading. Based on the results of the interview with an English teacher and the students limited vocabulary knowledge is the main factor of students' difficulties in reading comprehension. Students unfamiliar with many words in the text, so the students faced the difficulties in comprehending the text. Students have limited vocabulary knowledge which caused misunderstanding or comprehension error with the text.

Beside the main factor, the students have lack of fluency, so they cannot comprehend the text well and take the accurate information. Students also have lack of familiarity with the subject matter. Students felt familiar with the text, if the text is equipped by pictures. Then, the level of text is difficult in its vocabulary. After that, students did not use the effective reading strategies. Students made error interpretation about the content of the text. The students also weak in verbal reasoning and have Problems with Processing Information. Then, students also have problems in recalling information after reading. Students cannot convey the information that has been taken during the comprehending text.

In order to see these research findings related to the other previous researches, there were two similar journals which had been conducted. The first journal was "An Analysis of Students' Difficulties on Reading Comprehension of Descriptive Text at the Eighth Grade of SMP Negeri 2 Barumun Tengah in 2020/2021 Academic Year" by Hasibuan, Aprida and Octaviany (2021). This study aimed to find: 1) difficulties in reading comprehension of descriptive texts faced by grade VIII students of SMP Negeri 2 Barumun Tengah for the academic year 2020/2021, 2) factors of difficulty in reading comprehension of descriptive texts faced by class VIII students of Middle School 2 Barumun for the 2020/2021 academic year. This study used descriptive qualitative method. Data was collected by means of tests and interviews. The results of this study were: 1) students' difficulty in understanding descriptive text readings is very bad with an average score of 31.87% the percentage is wrong on the main idea 22.93%, wrong on specific information 15.60%, wrong in vocabulary 26.60%, wrong reference 19.27%, wrong conclusion 15.60%. 2) Factors contributing to students' difficulty are that students' motivation to read the texts is very low, students' learning aids are very important for achieving their learning goals, and students' learning environment is having a big impact on your difficulties.

This research was in line with previous research that conducted by Hasibuan. The students faced difficulties in reading comprehension. Since reading comprehension became their problems, the role of teacher was very important to help students in overcoming their problem. Therefore, this research was conducted to support previous findings. Teachers' awareness of how to teach reading comprehension should be increased in order for them to be able to teach in more effective methods.

The second journal was "An Analysis of Tenth Grade Students' Difficulties in Comprehending Recount Text" by Prayitno, Dewi and Rekha (2021). The purpose of this study was to identify the problems faced by Grade 10 students of SMA Negeri 1 Jejawi and to identify the factors that influenced the students' difficulties in understanding the recounted texts. The survey found that 68.7% of students had trouble finding the main idea, 70.15% of students had trouble understanding vocabulary, 66% of students had

trouble finding references, and students 59.3% had trouble finding the purpose of the text. 67.24% of students had trouble finding detailed information and 81.95% of students had trouble judging the overall structure of the text. Several factors that influenced students' difficulty comprehending recounted texts were the material, including long sentences, word limitations, learner background, and environment. The journal demonstrated about students' difficulties in comprehending recount text, meanwhile, this research showed about students' difficulties in comprehending descriptive text.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussion above, the researcher can conclude two points as follows:

- 1) There were a total of 332 difficulties experienced by Eighth Grade students of SMP Methodist 9 Medan in comprehending English reading text, they are 67 difficulties in Determining Main Idea with a percentage of 20.2%, 58 difficulties in Finding Detail Information with a percentage of 17.5%, 62 difficulties in Making Inference with a percentage of 18.7%, 63 difficulties in Identifying Reference with a percentage of 18.9%, and 82 difficulties in Understanding Vocabulary with a percentage of 24.7%.
- 2) Those difficulties were happened because of several factors, such as limited vocabulary knowledge, lack of fluency, lack of familiarity with the subject matter, difficulty level of the text (readability), inadequate use of effective reading strategies, weak verbal reasoning, problems with processing information, and problems in recalling information after reading.

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