



Reading Comprehension Difficulties on Students' Perception in Narrative Text at Eleventh Grade of Vocation High School

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the reading comprehension difficulties faced by eleventh-grade students and how to solve the students' reading comprehension difficulties. This research uses mixed methods with an explanatory sequential design to collect data, both quantitative and qualitative. Reading tests to collect quantitative data and interviews to collect qualitative data. Twenty students from SMKN 1 Lolomatua participated in obtaining quantitative and qualitative data. The research results showed that 76,25% of students experienced difficulty in making conclusions. Second, 44.3 % of students had difficulty determining the main idea. Third, 68,3 % of students have difficulty interpreting vocabulary. Fourth, 45 % of students found it difficult to identify references. Fifth, 52 % of students had difficulty detailing information. Then, four the strategies to solve students' difficulties in reading comprehension. They are students have to reading a lot of English books, master of the vocabularies, find synonym and antonym words, and for pronunciation students can use smartphone application.

Keywords: *Reading comprehension, narrative text, students' difficulties, strategies;*

Introduction

Reading comprehension in schools, particularly in English, is taught with the expectation that students will gain more knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values from it. Because reading comprehension instruction demands students to be able

to comprehend texts not just by reading them but also by grasping their meaning, it is a very complex subject that calls for accuracy, precision, and a deeper understanding of the material.

One language skill that helps students comprehend things is reading. Still, some people have little interest in reading because they do not have any interesting books to read. Reading is one of the basic English skills. Reading activity is an activity that collaborates between physical and mental processes. Collaboration here means when doing reading not only physics that works, but also mind. Ahuja and Ahuja in (Sadji Evenddy et al., 2021) stated that sensory and mental processes involve reading because of the use of eyes and mind at the same time. It is also supported by Nunan (Sadji Evenddy et al., 2021) that stated the skill to make sense and derive meaning from the printed words is reading. Reading makes the readers' eyes move around and makes the readers' brains turn the ideas and knowledge that the readers get.

Meanwhile, reading is also the readers' active process of understanding written language to get information and knowledge. As it is stated by Grellet in (Sadji Evenddy et al., 2021), reading is an active skill. Reading has strategies such as guessing, predicting, checking, and asking oneself questions. Furthermore, Sabouri (2016: 229) said that the readers construct a meaningful illustration of literature using reading strategies to make the process of reading more effective, this is called an interactive process in reading. The researcher can assume that reading is changed in the written language to get information from the writer. From those theories, it can be concluded that reading is not only a process to read aloud the written text but also to identify the text and make the readers' preexisting knowledge to comprehend the text relate to the text.

Throughout the learning process, reading is a crucial activity for children. Written materials including books, magazines, letters, posters, and the like are a common source of educational resources. The K13 curriculum mandates that students learn how to read texts in a variety of genres.

Furthermore, reading comprehension questions account for 60% of the items on the national exam. It implies that to pass the national exam and comprehend written material, students must develop their reading comprehension skills. Stated differently, it will be imperative that students possess the ability to comprehend a wide range of texts.

In the meantime, reading difficulties are becoming a contemporary problem in the modern day. According to Wallace (2003:4) in (Sinambela et al., 2023) in one of the difficulties which young learners may have been the incapability to understand texts. They frequently struggle to understand the writings' deep significance. Some pupils struggle to identify each paragraph's primary idea. They are still unable to distinguish between the sentences that support the core idea and the supporting sentences. The last ten years have seen the completion of studies on reading difficulties that center on perception. As a result, determining how students perceive their reading difficulties is still necessary. Reading in a foreign language is more challenging than reading in one's native tongue, though. Even it will be a complex process if the students have to read in another language with various genres. Besides, the reader should recognize the words and sentences, and also understand the purpose of the text genre. Narrative text is one of the genres studied by secondary students, but it is still difficult for some students. According to (Suryani, 2022a) there are various difficulties encountered in the narrative text because it poses not only lexical difficulty but also rhetorical structuring of its action throughout the story.

From the explanation above, it is important to find out students' reading problems with narrative text from the perception of students. As part of the teaching and learning process, the findings regarding the reading difficulties that students perceive in narrative texts will be helpful to both students and teachers (Sari et al., 2020). Teachers will be able to better assist their students in becoming better readers and improve their reading comprehension if they are aware of their problems. The teacher can help students with their reading difficulties by providing the appropriate solution, such as activities that are appropriate for developing students' reading skills based on their perceptions. If students struggle with the

reading process, for instance, the instructor can offer helpful exercises like jigsaw puzzles and peer tutoring. Studies regarding students' perceptions of their reading comprehension have been conducted.

Based on the writer observation, the students at eleventh grade of SMK Negeri 1 Lolomatua have difficulties in reading comprehension. They had low reading comprehension. They did not understand how to analyze English texts. Therefore, they did not enjoy reading English texts and were not interested in reading activities. The researchers were interested in analyzing the students' difficulties in reading comprehension and finding out the difficulties factors that the students face in reading comprehension. Based on the problem above, the researchers are interested in conducting research concerning "Reading Comprehension Difficulties on Students' Perception in Narrative Text at Eleventh Grade of SMK Negeri 1 lolomatua."

Research on students' perceptions of reading comprehension in narrative and expository texts was done (G. R. Sari et al., 2020a). It was discovered that none of the three publications that were analyzed examined how Indonesian students perceived difficulties with reading comprehension in narrative texts. The researcher was interested in doing a study such as (Nafsiah, n.d.), which just looked at how difficult students believed it was to read a narrative, to fill in the gaps left by the background and earlier investigations mentioned above. Eleventh-grade vocational students served as the participants in this study.

Method

The purpose of this study is to investigate and evaluate the reasons behind students' challenges with reading comprehension of narrative texts. It used a mixed-method approach, meaning that data were gathered simultaneously from both quantitative and qualitative sources. The characteristics of qualitative research design are naturalistic, descriptive data (words), concern with the process, and inductive (Bogdan & Bilken, in Sipayung et al., 2021)). Mixing and combining different datasets to be collected and assessed was done using the sequential explanatory approach. To achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the research topics and phenomena, this study is structured into quantitative and

qualitative components. The study is conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Lolomatua. It is located at Tuhemberua village Lolomatua district South Nias Regency. The schedule of this research is estimated to begin from February until March 2024. A sample of this research is one class as the respondents for a second semester, the total sample is 20 students. In conducting this research, the researcher used two research instruments. First, to collect the quantitative data, the researcher used a reading test as the research instrument. Then, to collect the qualitative data, the researcher conducts open-ended interviews with the students. The data was collected from February 2024. The first phase of the study is giving the students a reading test. The reading test consists of 20 questions with multiple choice and the reading test material taken from Erlangga Express UN SMA/MA 2020 Bahasa Inggris's book to obtain the types of difficulties faced by students in reading comprehension. The kind of text was given to the students is narrative text. The test is distributed directly in each class with a duration of 40 minutes. In the second phase, the researcher interviewed 20 students.

Findings and Discussion

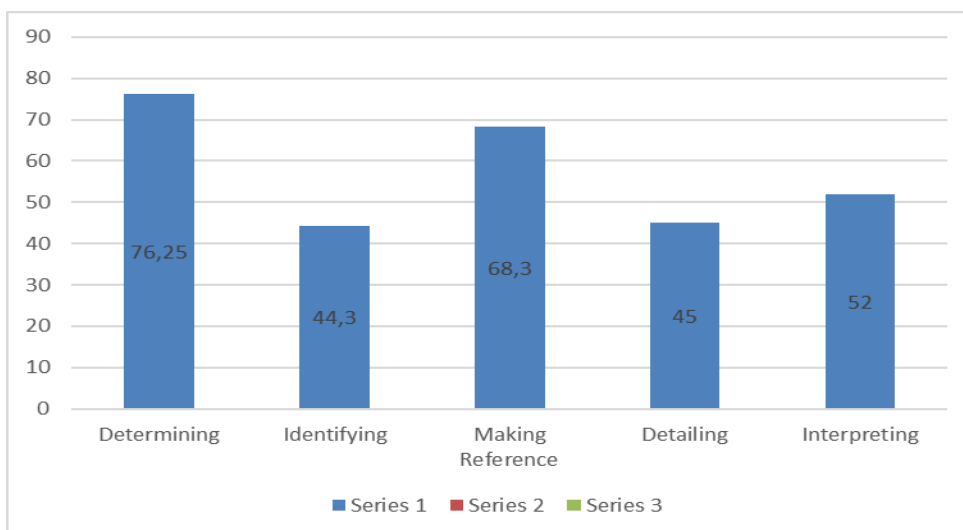
Findings

The Students' Difficulties in Reading Comprehension

The first finding, the researcher presented the result of analyzing the data of students' difficulties using five aspects of reading comprehension as the indicator. According to Sridharan and Said (Sridharan & Said, 2020, p.50), five aspects of reading comprehension are determining the main idea, identifying references, making inferences, detailing information, and interpreting vocabulary. The data was taken by giving the students 20 questions of reading tests. The researcher calculates the frequency of difficulties by using percentage formula.

The following chart summarize the data about the students' difficulties in comprehending reading narrative text.

Chart 1. The Percentage of Students' Difficulties in Reading



Strategy to solve reading difficulties

The students used strategies to solve their reading difficulties in limited vocabulary, by: memorizing vocabularies, opening the dictionary, looking the meaning by mobile phone, asking to their friends and always practice to speak with their friends; the students used strategy to solve their difficulties in low comprehension of the text by increase their vocabulary, and try to understand the meaning of the text; strategies used by students to solve their difficulties in low words recognition by list unknown words, looking synonym unknown word; the next strategies used by the students to solve their difficulties in weakness attack particularly, grammar students asked their teacher, asking to their friend, learning by the dictionary about tenses, trying to make sentences, using mobile phone. And the last, strategies used by the students to overcome their difficulties in slow reading rate were students always practice to read narrative text, hearing music, by using mobile phone to practice the words, asking to their teacher how to read the words.

Based on the statement above, the researcher concluded that, in learning a foreign language, students need to master the vocabulary. Students have to increase their vocabulary by reading many English texts, such as books, novels, poems, etc. If the students get a new word, just take a note, give the definition, find synonyms and antonyms of that word, make an example of the sentence, and memorize the word. It will help the students to have a lot of vocabulary. For the pronunciation of each word, students can use a smartphone application such as Google Translate to know the correct pronunciation of the words.

Discussion

In this section, the researcher discusses the data from the test and the interview that has been presented in the Findings. The discussion is separated into two sections. They are the difficulties faced by students based on five aspects of reading comprehension and the factors causing the students' difficulties in reading comprehension. Further, it can be seen in chart 4.1 that making inferences has the highest percentage of difficulties students face when comprehending reading narrative text. It can be seen that making inferences has a percentage of 63.7%, at the second position, there is determining main idea with a percentage of 56.15%, at the third position, there is interpreting vocabulary with a percentage of 51%, at the fourth position, there is identifying reference with a percentage of 47.5%, and at the fifth position, there is detailing information with a percentage of 45.9%.

Based on the data above, the percentage of students who answered incorrectly of the questions that were classified based on reading comprehension aspect was still very high. It means that many students have difficulty comprehending and answering the reading text that has been given. First, students' difficulty in making inferences. According to Abbas and Narjes (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016a, p.234-235), making inferences is a crucial aspect of good reading for readers. Readers need to draw a conclusion and make meaning from the text. However, in this study, several students couldn't get the conclusions and morals of the text because they didn't understand the text and get the main idea of the text. Whereas in making inferences or finding implied information from the text, the readers must comprehend the text more. One example of a student's mistake in

making inferences is students gave the wrong answer to infer the story they read. Some of the students answered everyone should live diligently and have respect for each other. While the correct answer is nobody believes a liar even when he tells the truth.

Second is difficulty in determining the main idea. According to (Satriani, 2018, p.19) to recall important information from a reading can be taken from the main idea of the text. In reading comprehension, students must also be able to pick up important points in a text to ensure they understand the text being read. But, most of them couldn't get the main idea correctly. For example, main idea's question number one, the students needed to determine the point of a whole text, but students answered incorrectly to question number one. The correct answer for question number one is the shepherd boy who cried wolf. But almost students answered A shepherd boy who got attacked by a wolf. Only 3 students were right in answering question number one.

Third is difficulty in interpreting vocabulary. As we know, vocabulary is an important thing to learn a foreign language. In exploring this aspect, the researcher used types of synonyms and antonymous questions to ascertain whether the student has a rich vocabulary or not and also ensure that the student can interpret the vocabulary in question. For example, for question number 5 "He imagined if he ever had to encounter a wolf." The underlined word is closest in meaning to... For this question, some of them answered the synonym of encounter is fight or prank, while the closest meaning of encounter is meet.

Fourth is difficulty in identifying references. In answering reference questions, students must understand the pronouns used in the text. For example, question number 20, "The peasant saw a big peach floating in the river and picked it up." (Paragraph 2) The word it refers to... Half of the students gave the incorrect answer. Some of them answered that the word it refers to the river, while the correct answer is big peach. ... pick it up, it means the peasant picked the big peach up.

Fifth is difficulty in getting the details of information. In reading comprehension, students must be able to get detailed information contained in the text. In this aspect, students answered a lot of wrong answers to number 13. "Which statement is true based on the text?" Most of the students answered this question incorrectly. Some of them answer the choice Momotaro means "the boy that likes eating peaches" while the correct answer is Momotaro's father was a farmer. It can be shown in the first paragraph of the text... there lived a peasant and his wife. Most of the students missed that farmer is a synonym for peasant.

Based on the findings of previous studies, the researcher found the differences between the researcher's research and previous studies. In the researcher's research, the indicator to find students' difficulties in reading comprehension used five aspects; making inferences, determining the main idea, interpreting vocabulary, identifying reference, and detailing information with the highest difficulty in making inference 63.7%, in Eko Prayitno, Dewi Sartika & Rekha Asmara's research, the indicator to find students' difficulties in reading comprehension used six aspects; finding the main idea, grammatical features (vocabulary), reference, the purpose of the text, detailed information, and generic structure with the highest difficulty in determining generic structure 81.95% (Prayitno et al., 2021, p.30). Next, in Desi Sapitri, Fitri Novia, and Rachmanita's research, the indicator to find students' difficulties in reading comprehension used six aspects; finding reference, moral value, deducing meaning, specific information, detailed information, and main idea with the highest difficulty in finding detail information 67.05% (Sapitri et al., 2020, p.103-108). In addition, Hamza Al-Jarrah & Nur Salina Binti Ismail's research found the highest difficulty in reading comprehension of the students is a lack of ability to recognize the type and structure of the text they read with the percentage of 73.7% (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018, p.35-37).

After classifying the difficulties, the researcher concluded that the students had trouble understanding English reading texts. According to the reading test results, there are still many students who did not correctly answer the questions. In this study, researchers sought to explore exactly the factors of difficulties that

students experience in comprehending reading narrative text. According to the findings, the factors that cause students' difficulties in reading comprehension are categorized into six factors. First, the factor that causes students' difficulty in reading comprehension is limited vocabulary knowledge. Most of the students conveyed that they didn't have a rich vocabulary. They said they often encounter unfamiliar words that make them unable to get the meaning of the text. This is in line with (Sapitri et al., 2020, p.110), students are confused in reading the text and getting the answer when they have limited vocabulary.

Second, the factor that causes students' difficulty in reading because of lack of fluency. They said they had a bit of a hard time when they didn't know how to pronounce the word correctly. It also makes their reading not fluent and stops every time they find a word with difficult pronunciation. This is supported Westwood in (Nuralimah et al., 2023) lack of fluency makes reading more difficult for students to process letters and words.

Third, inadequate use of effective reading strategies is also a factor that causes students' difficulty in reading comprehension. All of the interviewed students stated that they did not yet know how the strategies in reading that they could use to be more effective when reading. furthermore, they also said that their teachers had never taught reading strategy in the classroom.

Fourth, the students have problems with processing information. Based on the interview, the students stated when they read the English text, they read many times to understand the text. They also often feel anxious when reading. So, they become unfocused and lose the information they have read. This is supported (Westwood, 2008, p.37) if students are stressed, anxious, or disturbed by other problems, it will reduce their working memory capacity.

Fifth, the factor that causes students' difficulty in reading comprehension is low reading interest. Based on the interviews, they learn and read English texts only if there is a schedule in class. So, they read only because they were asked by their teacher, not because of their interest in reading English texts. This is similar to (Prayitno et al., 2021, p.34) findings, students had no desire to read English

material and were too lazy to read English text.

Lastly, students have difficulty in reading comprehension because they have less motivation. Some students said they didn't get support from their parents to focus on learning English. They were never given reading books that they could use to improve their reading skills in English and other books to learn English.

Conclusion

After analyzing and discussing the data, the writer draws the following conclusion:

The difficulties that students face in reading comprehension in narrative text known by using tests in multiple choice form and interviewing the students to know the factors that cause the students' difficulties in reading comprehension. The finding from the test showed that making inferences has the highest percentage of difficulties students face when comprehending reading narrative text. It can be seen in figure 1 the result of the student difficulties:

1. Making inference with a percentage 63.7%
2. Determining main idea with a percentage 56.15%
3. Interpreting vocabulary with a percentage 51%
4. Identifying reference with a percentage 47,5%
5. Detailing information with a percentage 45,9%

The finding from interview, the researcher found some factors that cause the students' difficulties in reading comprehension. The factors are limited vocabulary knowledge, lack of fluency, inadequate use of effective reading strategies, problems with processing information, low reading interest, and less motivation. With limited vocabulary knowledge, the students did not have a rich vocabulary and often encountered unfamiliar words that made them unable to get the meaning of the text. In lack of fluency, sometimes students do not know how to pronounce a word correctly, so their reading is not fluent. Next, students also conveyed that they did not know the strategies in reading comprehension that they could use to be more effective when reading. In problems with processing information, students read many times to understand the text. Then, they become unfocused and lose the information when they feel anxious in reading activities. Another factor, students are not interested in reading English texts. They read only because they were asked by their teacher in the class, not because of their interest in reading English texts. Last, the factor is less motivation. They did not get motivation from their parents and did not get support from their parents to focus on learning English. Their

parents never give reading books that students could use to improve their reading skills in English and other books to learn English.

The strategies used to solve the students' reading comprehension difficulties in narrative text. The strategies to solve their reading difficulties in limited vocabulary, by: memorizing vocabularies, opening the dictionary, looking the meaning by mobile phone, asking to their friends and always practice to speak with their friends; the students used strategy to solve their difficulties in low comprehension of the text by increase their vocabulary, and try to understand the meaning of the text; strategies used by students to solve their difficulties in low words recognition by list unknown words, looking synonym unknown word; the next strategies used by the students to solve their difficulties in weakness attack particularly, grammar students asked their teacher, asking to their friend, learning by the dictionary about tenses, trying to make sentences, using mobile phone. And the last, strategies used by the students to overcome their difficulties in slow reading rate were students always practice to read narrative text, hearing music, by using mobile phone to practice the words, asking to their teacher how to read the words.

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