An Analysis of Students' Understanding of Language Features in Narrative Texts

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Article Info	Abstract
  Corresponding Author: Reza Pujiesta Ryanda Putri rezapujiesta33955@gmail.com English Education Study Program, Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember	*This study aims to investigate students' understanding of language features in narrative texts, including characters, past tense, adverbs of time, direct speech, and moral values. It also explores the factors that contribute to students' difficulties in comprehending these features. This study was conducted at SMK Islam Bustanul Ulum Pakusari Jember with 29 male students, using a convergent mixed-methods design, quantitative worksheet analysis, and qualitative questionnaire insights. Quantitative data were used to identify students' understanding of language features and moral values in narrative texts based on worksheet results. Qualitative data to explain the factors contributing to students' difficulties, including reading strategies and learning obstacles. Data sets complement by showing well-understood or challenging aspects and reasons behind results. Results showed students had a strong understanding of past tense, direct speech, and specific characters, with all (100%) identifying them correctly. However, some aspects needed improvement, especially adverbs of time (correctly identified by 65.52% of students), spelling consistency, and English moral value (34.48%). The questionnaire results highlighted variations in reading strategies, such as scanning and skimming techniques, as well as obstacles, including limited vocabulary and lack of focus, which were addressed through dictionary to improve comprehension of narrative meaning. This study shows that culturally relevant worksheets effectively improved comprehension and supported students' understanding by linking linguistic learning with local heritage. These findings suggest focusing future instruction on gradual support for inferential comprehension and spelling accuracy, with further research exploring longer interventions, mixed-gender participants, and strategies to strengthen moral value interpretation in narrative texts.*

1. Introduction

According to Oviogun & Veerdee, (2020), language is a means of communication among members of society through sound symbols produced by human speech organs and a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for interaction, meaning that a word has no natural connection with the object it refers to but gains its meaning based on social convention or mutual agreement among speakers.

Building on this understanding of language as a vital communication system lays the foundation for recognizing English's role as a global lingua franca. English has become internationally dominant due to factors such as globalization, migration, and modern media, leading to its widespread use among speakers of different native languages (Uyar & Erozan, 2024). In the context of EFL learning, building on its widespread recognition as a global language, the skill of reading comprehension becomes essential, as it enables individuals to effectively understand and engage with written texts. One of the texts that is often used is a narrative text.

By presenting structured stories with characters and events, and providing a natural context in folktales, students can learn to understand vocabulary, identify detailed and factual information, recognize main ideas, understand the meaning of certain words, interpret implicit information, and make inferential conclusions from the implied meaning in the text (Silalahi et al., 2025). Narrative texts also entertain and teach moral values, provide information, encourage reflection on experiences, and expand readers' imagination Aprilia, Intan, Susanti, Elis, Setian, (2022); (Hanum et al., 2020). The study by (Ali et al., 2025) supports this view, showing that narrative texts help students organize their thoughts logically and express them creatively through the structure of orientation, complication, and resolution.

In addition to understanding its function, students also need to pay attention to the linguistic elements, which are commonly referred to as language features in narrative texts, because this helps develop their understanding of tense and grammar, and these elements are useful in everyday communication. The past tense is used to describe events that have already happened (Abdullah Syukur & Ardhy Supraba, 2022). The adverbs of time that help show when events occur in the story, direct speech makes the dialogue in the text come alive, and clarifies the characters' emotions and interactions more realistically. Beyond linguistic aspects, narrative texts also play an educational role in shaping students' moral understanding. Moral values are also essential in education because they guide human behavior, shape students' character, and, through narrative texts, help convey life lessons and positive attitudes that learners can apply in daily life (Setiawan & Fahriany, 2017; Putri & Maisarah, 2023).

Understanding these linguistic and moral elements requires students to actively engage with the text at a deeper level to identify, analyze, and write the answer with problem-solving skills. Therefore, reading and critical thinking are two of the most important abilities that EFL students require to accelerate and enhance their learning process (Anaktototy & Lesnussa, 2022). Reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning from text, aiming for a comprehensive understanding of its described content rather than isolated words or sentences, while involving children's developmental models that form mental representations of the text's ideas and purposes during reading (Suryani et al., 2021).

Reading comprehension consists of several key components, including vocabulary knowledge, the ability to make inferences from the text, understanding text structure, and recognizing the writer's purpose, attitude, tone, and mood (Rupley, 2005, as cited in Fatmawaty et al., 2022). Therefore, one can comprehend what the researcher anticipates when they read a paper by enhancing this talent. Reading skill plays a crucial role for students both while they are pursuing education at different school levels and after they enter society or the workplace, as it is a fundamental ability that enables them to effectively participate in learning activities (Arisman & Haryanti, 2019).

Teaching narrative texts in Indonesian EFL classrooms often faces challenges in students' understanding of language features such as adverbs of time, past tense, specific characters, direct speech, and moral values, especially at the vocational high school level, where the vocational focus influences the priority of English (Machmud, Wijaya, & Rahman, (2023). In this regard, previous studies in Indonesian EFL classrooms have made important contributions in analyzing students' errors in narrative texts, particularly grammatical aspects such as the simple past tense (Fanny et al., 2022). Similarly, a 2023 study examining simple past tense errors reported that misinformation of 52% of irregular verbs happens because students feel confused and unable to understand the simple past tense, as they do not know the difference between regular and irregular verbs, which makes students have difficulty writing paragraphs (Kartini, 2022).

Furthermore, in the context of vocational high school, it was found that spelling errors, such as the use of capital letters, prepositions, periods, and commas, still dominated (Fahira & Arifin, 2024). However, few studies examine multiple language features simultaneously (characters, tense, adverbs, direct speech, and moral values) using culturally-based worksheets in vocational EFL contexts.

Furthermore, in the Indonesian context, cultural elements embedded in folklore have been shown to enhance students' motivation and participation in language learning while promoting cultural awareness and more holistic learning outcomes (Ramli & Rahman, 2024). In their study, the folklore used included stories such as Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih and Sangkuriang. However, the present study differs by employing the legend of Rara Jonggrang to introduce cultural heritage sites, particularly the Prambanan Temple in Yogyakarta, as a means of integrating language learning with local historical and cultural contexts. This worksheet provides focused tasks with clear instructions and a logical sequence, guiding students to systematically identify characters, past verbs, and adverbs of time.

Such approaches have shown promise in vocational settings, where time constraints and practical skills dominate, yet English remains crucial for global competitiveness. By focusing on these elements, educators can overcome challenges such as limited vocabulary and reading focus, ultimately leading to more effective comprehension strategies. This study contributes to the broader discussion on English as a foreign language (EFL) pedagogy by highlighting how culturally sensitive materials can enhance linguistic and ethical development, preparing students for real-world applications outside the classroom.

Based on this background, this study aimed to examine students' understanding of language features in narrative texts. The following research questions are the focus of this study:

RQ1: How high is the student's level of understanding of each language feature?
RQ2: What factors cause difficulties?

2. Method

Design

This study used a convergent mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative data analysis. According to Creswell & Creswell, (2018) This design allows researchers to collect numerical and descriptive data at the same time, analyze them separately, and integrate the findings for better understanding of the research problem. Quantitative assessment is conducted through students' daily test scores, which are completed using worksheets. These Scores measure students' level of understanding of characteristic the linguistic elements of the material. The qualitative data support the development of data analysis.

Participant

The study was conducted at SMK Islam Bustanul Ulum Pakusari Jember, involving 29 male students from class X DKV 3. The class was selected due to the school's homogeneous system and the researcher's teaching internship. Although the initial plan involved three classes, time and access limitations resulted in selecting only X DKV 3. Of the 35 students, 6 were excluded due to absence, leaving 29 valid responses for analysis. This all-male sample is acknowledged as a limitation, recommending involving mixed-gender participants in future studies. Students were 16-17 years old, native Madurese speakers, and still developing their English proficiency.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Variable	Description
Participants	29 Students
Class	X DKV 3
School	SMK Islam Bustanul Ulum Pakusari
Gender	Male
Age range	16-17 years old
L1	Madurese
Location	Eastern Jember Regency
English Proficiency	Intermediate

Data and Source of Data

The quantitative data from students' written answers were scored using a rubric. This gives numerical results that measure their understanding of language features. The scores objectively show students' ability to identify adverbs of time, past tense verbs, specific characters, direct speech, and moral values in narrative texts. The worksheet had one question per feature in a box, like: "Mention adverb of time, specific character, direct

speech, and the past tense from the Rara Jonggrang story. Data also comes from daily tests done individually under teacher supervision to ensure honest and accurate answers.

Qualitative data from students' questionnaire responses provides insight into their learning difficulties, experiences, and perceptions when working with narrative texts. These responses served as supporting information that enriches the interpretation of the numerical data by showing the reasons behind students correct, partial, and incorrect answers. Students' written explanations, reflections, and statements about challenges they encountered, such as difficulty remembering verb tenses or identifying implied meanings, were analyzed to understand how they completed the task.

The primary source of the data was the students' written answers from 29 students of class X DKV 3 at SMK Islam Bustanul Ulum Pakusari Jember. Additional supporting data were used to strengthen the interpretation of the findings.

Data Collecting Technique

The worksheet assessed five features in this study consist of aspects assessed in form of linguistic characteristics of narrative texts which include special characters, past tense, adverb of time, direct speech, and moral value, as well as dependent variables in form of student understanding as seen from the results of daily tests or worksheets which assess the correctness or incorrectness of students' answers in each of these aspects.

All data was collected directly from classroom activities during the daily exam. Worksheets are provided during the learning. After the teacher explains the material and gives examples, students complete the worksheets as part of the learning activity. Based on the story, after learning moral values, students can focus more on English vocabulary and its use in class (Tri & Hidayah, 2025). Rara Jonggrang's story has a simple, progressive plot, easy to follow. The vocabulary relates to actions and consequences, practical for use. Thus, it's text is more suitable for learning. Worksheets are collected at the lesson's end as quantitative data.

The teacher provides a worksheet on the language features of narrative texts, including several aspects such as adverbs of time, past tense, specific character, direct speech, and moral value from the text Rara Jonggrang encourages discussion, critical thinking, and motivation, and helps students organize ideas more systematically, making it an effective learning tool (Siregar et al., 2023). Each aspect has indicators scored 1 (met/correct) and 0 (not met/incorrect)(Yulianti et al., 2025). Correct and incorrect answers per indicator per student are systematically recorded to support statements. Data recorded based on indicator fulfillment per aspect.

Answers marked fulfilled if core indicators are stated. Minor spelling or sentence structure inaccuracies marked fulfilled if unrelated to the aspect or unclear, for example, wrong adverb type. Indonesian responses were still analyzed qualitatively to illustrate students' inferential understanding, even though they were not counted as correct in the quantitative scoring. The researchers could directly calculate the number of accuracy and errors in each aspect.

Figure 1. Worksheet Language Features in Narrative Text
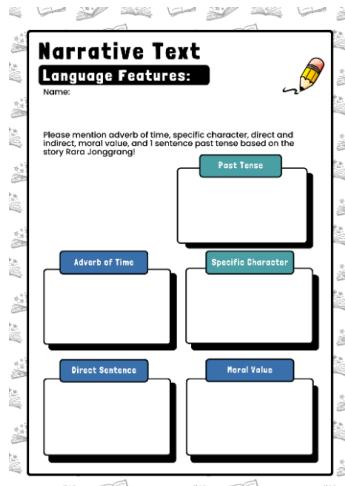
Table 2. narrative text assessment rubric

Language Features	Sample Student Answers	Score & Explanation
Adverb of Time	Once upon a time, one day, in one night, as midnight approached, already dawn, the day had come, From then on.	Score 1 if you are able to mention adverbs of time and adverbials of time based on the text.
Specific Character	"Rara Jonggrang", "Prabu Bandung Bondowoso", "Roro"	Score 1 despite answering "Roro" because it still indicates the intended character with a minor spelling error is accepted.
Direct Speech	"I will marry you, you must build one thousand temples."	Score 1 if it uses quotation marks and a complete sentence
Past Tense	"Killed", "defeated", "wanted", or complete sentences	Score 1 for single verb (partial recognition), 0 for out-of-context sentences.
Moral Value	To be honest and keep promises is a moral value of the text. And then "do not lie", don't cheat	Score 1 is given only when the moral value is correctly identified in English

Data Analysis Technique

Quantitative analysis was conducted using manual coding, and the researcher created a table. The contents of the table are mentioned and analyzed in each column based on the aspects of the text, the language features of the narrative text, such as adverbs of time, past tense, specific characters, direct speech, and moral value. And explaining the aspects, for each aspect, the number of correct answers and the number of

incorrect answers from each student was recorded. The data in the table was then analyzed to determine the extent of students' understanding and the tendency of errors that appeared in each aspect. The assessor is a researcher who works with the teacher. The results were converted into percentages to describe the distribution of student responses for each language feature, to represent the accuracy of student responses for each language feature, and were further explained through students' actual answers.

Qualitative analysis was conducted by reviewing students' answers to the questionnaire to identify whether their understanding was correct. Furthermore, relevant student quotes were used as supporting evidence. The focus of this analysis was to examine how students understood the five language features in narrative text based on their answers on the worksheet. The analysis was conducted in several steps. Qualitative analysis was conducted through open coding, followed by thematic grouping. The analysis identified four themes: students' reading strategies, learning barriers, retention of narrative language features, and learning experiences in using worksheets.

Quantitative data in the form of test scores were used to indicate students' understanding of the linguistic elements in narrative texts. Qualitative data from student response questionnaires were then integrated to support and strengthen the quantitative findings by describing students' learning experiences, including reading techniques used, other learning media, and the classroom atmosphere during the lesson.

3. Result

This section presents the results of students' performance on the assessed language features in narrative texts based on worksheet analysis. To provide an overall view, a summary table of percentage scores is presented before the individual student data.

Table 3. Summary Statistics of Students' Performance on Narrative Text Language Features

Language Feature	Correct	Incorrect	Presentage%
Adverbs of Time	19	10	65,52%
Specific Characters	29	0	100%
Past Tense	29	0	100%
Direct Sentences	29	0	100%
Moral Values	10	19	34,48%

Table 4. Percentage of Students' Performance across Narrative Text Language Features
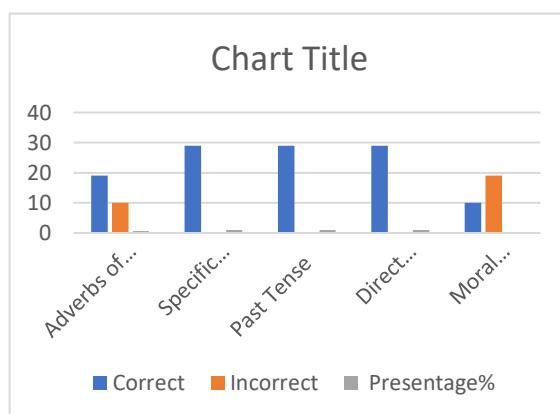
Students achieved 100% accuracy in identifying past tense, specific characters, and direct speech. Adverbs of time showed moderate performance (65.52%), while moral values had the lowest accuracy (34.48%).

Table 3 details students' performance across five narrative text features: adverbs of time, past tense, direct speech, and moral values. The following section explains each aspect in detail, highlighting response patterns from student worksheets.

1. *Specific Character*

The results show that all students (100%) were able to identify the specific characters in the narrative text correctly. Students successfully mentioned the main characters, such as Rara Jonggrang, Bandung Bondowoso, and Prabu Baka. Minor spelling variations, such as writing "Roro Jonggrang" instead of "Rara Jonggrang", were still categorized as correct because they referred to intended characters and did not affect meaning and have 1 scored. These findings indicate that students had no significant difficulty in recognizing characters in the narrative text.

2. *Adverbs of Time*

The results indicate that students' understanding of adverbs of time was moderate. Out of 29 students, 19 students (65,52%) correctly identified adverbs of time used in the narrative text, while 10 students (34,48%) provided incorrect responses. Correct answers are commonly included expressions such as once upon a time, once upon a time, one day, one night, which were mentioned by six students. A total of nine people answered once "upon a time" and "one day". However, several students identified words that did not function as adverbs of time in the narrative context, such as numerical expressions or time-related nouns. In addition, four students provided similar responses with the inclusion of at midnight and from then on. Meanwhile, five students included the expression one thousand, and another five students included midnight, which are not classified as adverbs of time.

3. *Past Tense*

The findings reveal that all students (100%) correctly identified past tense forms used in narrative text. Students were able to mention past tense verbs, such as one day handsome young man named Bandung Bondowoso, who had supernatural powers, defeated and killed Prabu Baka. There are also those equipped with either as an individual verb form (e.g., killed, defeated, wanted, agreed, decided, ordered, believed, called, and named. This is because the teacher explained previously that the past tense usually ends with -ed in the verb. This sentence was answered by 16 students. Other examples have answered with

There was a beautiful Javanese named Rara Jonggrang. She was very famous for her beauty and was the daughter of Prabu Baka, the evil king as many as four students. Four students also answered with sentences that are appropriate to the context but are not in the text, such as defeated and killed Prabu Baka, and the temple became cursed rara jonggrang, turning her into a statue. that there are also those who answer completely with three sentences, one of which is above, and the second is that she was afraid of Bandung but didn't want to be rude, so she set a condition, and from then on, the temple became known as Prambanan temple, and the statue was called the Rara Jonggrang statue.

4. *Direct Speech*

The findings show that all students (100%) were able to identify direct speech correctly. Students successfully wrote direct speech taken from the text and used appropriate quotation marks to indicate direct speech. This answer is "I will marry you, but you must build one thousand temples in one night as a wedding gift. This result demonstrates that students had a strong understanding of direct speech in narrative texts.

5. *Moral Value*

The results show that students experienced greater difficulty in identifying moral values in the narrative text. Only 10 out of 29 students (34,48%) were able to correctly identify the moral values of the story, while the remaining students provided incomplete or incorrect responses.

Students who answered correctly were able to state moral messages such as do "do not like lie, do not like refuse promise", and another answer, "do not a reluctant promise" was answered by four students. In contrast, other students either failed to identify the moral message or expressed it inaccurately, resulting in incomplete or incorrect responses, and also answered in Indonesian language, such as "no, the story maruly teaches about the consequences of deception rather than honesty and keeping promises", "tidak boleh mengingkari janji, kejujuran", "tidak boleh mengingkari janji kita."

4. Discussion

1. *Incorrect spelling of character names in a specific character*

In this study, 100% of students correctly identified the specific characters in the narrative text. This aligns with questionnaire responses, where important characters like Rara Jonggrang, Bandung Bondowoso, and Prabu Baka, were answered completely and correctly, except for a spelling error: "Roro Jonggrang" should be "Rara Jonggrang" according to the text. Although minor, these errors affect consistency. This can be explained by first language (L1) interference, as in daily Indonesian or Javanese, "Roro" is more familiar than "Rara."

This phenomenon involved learners transferring familiar forms and strategies from their first language (L1) to their second language (L2) when writing. Similarly, Perkins & Zhang, (2024) stated, "L2 writers utilize their L1 to generate ideas, search for topics, develop concepts, and organize information." Similarly, Alisoy (2024) noted that learners naturally transfer their L1 patterns and habits into the L2, affecting word choice, structure, and meaning. This suggests that students may need to pay more attention to orthographic details.

Learners who practice foreign vocabulary in information-rich sentences tend to be less able to recall word forms, as their attention is directed more to the context than to the word form, so the association between form and meaning becomes weaker van den Broek et al., (2022). For some other students, clear instructions help them answer correctly, despite the many variations of names in Indonesian folk tales. Nevertheless, students answered correctly and demonstrated confidence in using language, as evidenced by responses like "karakter membantu saya memahami sifat dan peran tokoh" in the questionnaire.

2. *Misidentification of adverbs of time*

In this study, 65.52% of students correctly identified adverbs of time in the narrative text, while 34.48% showed difficulties. Adverbs of time are part of the adverbs that tell when something happened and express a point in time (Sholikha & Indriani, 2021). They are typically single-word modifiers, while adverbials of time may appear as phrases that provide temporal information. A score of 1 is given if the students mention appropriate adverbs of time and adverbials that are to the story, for example: once upon a time, one day, in one night, as midnight approached, already dawn, the day had come, from then on. Ten students answered once upon a time, one day, one night, one thousand, and midnight, because there was one thousand, expresses quantity and forms a noun phrase, as seen in the journal, which explicitly presents "a thousand temples" as part of a noun phrase and classifies it under article errors, not in the adverb or adverbial category (Sinaga & Ramadhani, 2020).

Another error is "midnight" as a noun instead of "as midnight", due to a lack of understanding of the syntactic and semantic role of adverbs, especially in contexts where temporal phrases appear similar to nouns related to time (Dias Hasna Sukmadewi & Muhardila Fauziah, 2025). This is a misspelling lexical error, as the student knows the word but misspells it (Zuhro & Budi, 2023)

However, four students answered completely, listing "once upon a time, one day, at midnight, and from then on. Fifteen students answered correctly with two to three words, such as once upon a time, one day, and one night. This aligns with questionnaire responses, where students stated, "adverb of time adalah keterangan waktu," showing basic understanding. These findings suggest that instruction should emphasize distinguishing grammatical function from lexical meaning through guided examples.

3. *Identifying the past tense*

In this study, 100% of students correctly identified past tense forms in the narrative text. This finding contrasts with Kartini (2022), who reported a 52% error rate in students' use of the past tense. Students in this study performed better because past tense forms are explicitly taught and easily recognized through verb endings, compared to other narrative features that require deeper interpretation. In terms of the past tense, the assessment follows the rule that a score of 1 is given if the student writes the past tense form. In daily tests, most students were able to read narrative opening sentences in the past tense quite well. Answers such as "One day, a handsome young man named Bandung Bondowoso, who possessed supernatural powers, defeated and killed Prabu Baka," demonstrated that students can apply verb 2 correctly in the context of folklore. In other words, students became more confident because they knew that the v2/v3 forms typically indicate the past tense, making identification easier (Naserly, 2022).

There are also answers that use past tense but are not yet completely complete, for example, "One day there was a handsome young man named Bandung," which is informatively correct in terms of tense but is not yet complete enough to open a story. In contrast, some students demonstrated accuracy and narrative completeness, as illustrated by the following example: "There was a beautiful Javanese woman named Rara Jonggrang, who was very famous for her beauty and was the daughter of Prabu Baka, the evil king." This quote shows the correct use of the simple past tense ("was") along with

detailed information about the characters and setting, which helps make the story clear and interesting.

Overall, the daily test results show that most students have mastered the use of the past tense in narrative writing, although some responses were brief all students accurately identified past tense forms. Questionnaire responses further support this, with students recalling past tense as "past tense adalah bentuk kata kerja untuk kejadian yang telah terjadi" or "yang saya tahu moral value dan waktu lampau," indicating growing familiarity although sometimes there are incompleteness.

4. *Improved accuracy in identifying direct speech*

In this study, 100% of students correctly identified direct speech according to the scoring rubric. Students performed well in identifying direct speech because it is clearly marked by opening and closing quotation marks. These explicit markers make direct speech easier to recognize than other narrative features. A score of 1 is awarded only for complete direct speech with proper quotation marks; responses without them or not contextually appropriate receive 0. In the daily test, all students demonstrated adequate mastery. For example, 29 students correctly delivered "I will marry you, but you must build a thousand temples in one night as a wedding gift," with accurate quotation marks and narrative context. They can answer complete and correctly formatted direct speech.

This finding indicates students recognize the character's speech sentence as a direct quotation that must be marked and written fully according to the text. During the test, students were able to identify quotation marks, reported sentences, and speaker attributions. Proper use of punctuation is important to avoid confusion and misinterpretation (Alruwani et al., 2025). Examples of direct speech with intonation, during reading, and focus on its features, help students understand how dialogue is represented in narrative texts. Direct speech makes the story feel alive, but makes the reader focus more on the words, while indirect speech helps the reader remember more easily who is speaking and the relationship of information in the story (Eerland & Zwaan, 2018). In the questionnaire, students defined direct speech as "direct speech adalah kalimat yang menggambarkan kejadian secara langsung," aligning with their improved accuracy in identifying and formatting it in test.

5. *Challenges in interpreting moral values*

In this study, 34.48% of students (10 out of 29) correctly identified the moral values in the narrative text. In the assessment, a score of 1 is given if the students state the correct moral values in English, including honesty and keeping promises. Four students wrote moral values correctly, despite linguistic errors, such as the grammatically incorrect phrase "don't be reluctant to promise," which was still considered correct because the essence of the moral value was appropriate. Five students wrote about moral values using Indonesian, and ten students wrote "not breaking promises," but these answers were not scored as they did not comply with the English writing requirement. Indonesian responses were conceptually correct but not scored as such because the assessment focused on English language production.

This indicates that students understood the moral message culturally but struggled to express it in English. This reveals two serious problems: first, students cannot draw implicit conclusions (inferential comprehension) from the text, and second, they

have difficulty constructing English sentences to express moral values. Students who have struggled with inferences tend to interpret the text literally, misunderstand the message, or misinterpret the meaning of the text(Rahmasari et al., 2024). Four students answered "no, the story teaches about the consequences of deception rather than honesty and keeping promises," while six wrote "do not like lie, do not like breaking promises." Despite inaccuracies, these answers received a full score of 1 because they captured the essence of the lesson about the consequences of deception, consistent with narrative analysis criteria that emphasize conceptual understanding over perfect syntax.

Overall, these findings highlight that the main challenge is not only recognizing the moral values but also expressing them accurately. Future instruction could focus on strengthening the understanding of moral content and appropriate written expression. Questionnaire responses echoed this, with students remembering moral values as"moral value adalah nilai-nilai moral value," yet challenges in expression persisted, as seen in phrases like "do not like lie, do not like breaking promises." Overall, these main challenge lies in expressing moral values accurately, and providing varied examples of moral value expressions in English may support students' expression.

6. *Students' reading technique, barriers, and retention of narrative language features: insights from questionnaire findings*

In addition to the linguistic aspects mentioned above, the questionnaire results revealed variations in reading strategies and barriers experienced by students, which provided additional insight into the learning process. Some students chose scanning strategies, such as "mencari informasi tertentu (scanning)" (Mukhofifah & Ekaningsih, 2023), while others prefer to read slowly with statements "saya membaca perlahan agar mengerti agar mengerti isi teks", which demonstrates adaptation to the complexity of narrative text. Major constraints include: "kurang ngerti bahasa Inggris" and "tidak paham semua" (Ginting, 2022). Which is often overcome through methods such as "membaca ulang teks dan sedikit menerjemahkankan", "mendiskusikan dengan teman", or even "menebak" and "muncul secara logika".

The use of Indonesian in the answers also varied, with some students stating "tidak ada, semuanya pakai Bahasa Inggris", but others admit in "lebih mudah dipahami" or "kurang fasih Bahasa Inggris" as a reason. Tools such as Google Translate are used by some students because "lebih praktis", while dictionaries are chosen for specific vocabulary, although some say "tidak menggunakan karena sudah belajar sebelumnya". When asked to name the elements they remembered, answers such as "direct speech, moral value, past tense, specific character, adverb of time" show good retention, although some responded "lupa" or "banyak tapi tidak ingat detail". The time factor also plays a role, with students feeling "berpengaruh apalagi teks panjang" or "butuh waktu untuk memahami dan menganalisis", which emphasizes the need for support for more complex texts. Overall, these findings confirm that worksheets help students with clear instruction, but such as vocabulary and reading focus need to be addressed to improve learning efficiency.

These findings suggest the need for emphasis on learning the ability to interpret and express moral values in English. Learning interventions can be focused on providing directed examples and simple language models so that students are able to express implicit meanings more accurately.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated students' understanding of language features in narrative text, focusing on specific characters, past tense, adverbs of time, direct speech or direct speech, and moral values, using worksheets based on the "Rara Jonggrang" folktale at SMK Islam Bustanul Ulum Pakusari Jember. The findings revealed that students demonstrated strong proficiency in identifying past tense, direct speech or direct speech and specific characters, with relatively fewer errors in adverbs of time. However, challenges persisted in spelling consistency due to first language (L1) interference and in accurately expressing moral values in English, often due to difficulties in inferential comprehension and linguistic construction. Questionnaire responses further highlighted variations in reading strategies, such as scanning or slow reading, and barriers like limited vocabulary and reading focus, which were mitigated through tools like Google Translate. Overall, the use of culturally relevant worksheets was associated with improved comprehension and focus on key language features, in line with the study's aim to bridge linguistic learning with local heritage.

Implications and Recommendations

Theoretically, these results highlight the role of L1 interference in EFL learning, supporting prior research on orthographic challenges and inferential skills (Alisoy, 2024; Rahmasari et al., 2024). Practically, the findings suggest that integrating folktales into EFL pedagogy can motivate students and improve engagement in vocational settings, where English proficiency is crucial for global competitiveness. However, the study has limitations, including a small, all-male sample from a single class, which may not generalize to broader populations; future research should include mixed-gender participants and diverse contexts to enhance validity.

6. Acknowledgement

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