

A STUDY ON THE STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES AND THEIR STRATEGIES IN COMPREHENDING NARRATIVES TEXT

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to find out what difficulties are faced by students in comprehending narrative text and to find out what strategies students use to solve difficulties in reading narrative text. In conducting this research, the researcher used descriptive qualitative research because this research focuses on analyzing or interpreting written material in its context. There are about 30 students in each class, but the researcher only took six students from each science class as the subject to fill out the questionnaire and only one student from each science class who could represent all the subject's representative as research participants to be interviewed. The findings of this study is students found it difficult to understand the narrative text and use various strategies to solve it. The difficulties that they faced were motivation, background knowledge, and language knowledge, while the strategies often used by students were the top-down strategy and then the bottom-up strategy.

Keyword: Students' difficulties, students' strategies, narrative text.

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of foreign languages has developed in Indonesia along with the community's need for the importance of language skills. One solution to the community's needs is that the government has provided a place in the world of education to learn foreign languages. Based on Kepmendiknas No. 23 of 2006, concerning Standards Graduation, in general, the purpose of learning English in Indonesia is that students must be able to demonstrate English skills in listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The purpose of learning English at the high school level is to have critical, creative thinking skills, verbal and written communication.

One of the most important skills that students must develop to be successful in school is reading. This skill is required because it is the basis of academic learning. According to Cline, Johnstone, & King (2006), reading is decoding and understanding written texts.

According to Sholihah (2011) in addition to listening, speaking, and writing, reading is an important part of language skills needed to acquire knowledge and gather information.

In reading activities at school, several texts are used in the learning process, one of which is narrative text. Herman (2014) stated that narrative texts are introduced to entertain or entertain readers with real or imaginary experiences in different ways. The purpose of narrative text is to entertain and tell a story that happened in the past. Narrative text is a type of text that describes a fictional or nonfiction sequence of events.

There are some difficulties for readers to understand the ideas in the text. Gunning (2002) divides reading problems into five aspects. First, problem of language knowledge, readers should have language proficiency first before they read in a foreign language or second language because a lack of language knowledge can cause problem in reading.

Despite the various educational programs that have been designed to help students improve their reading skills, many students still find it difficult to complete their studies. According to Iftanti (2012), many students do not have good reading habits even though they are learning English. Djamarah (2012) argues that difficulty is when students cannot learn properly due to risk, obstacles, or disruptions in learning. It can be argued that reading difficulties is a condition in which students cannot read properly due to obstructions or distractions.

Then what do students use to overcome difficulties in reading texts? they need to use strategies to solve their reading problems. According to Karami (2008), reading strategies are psychological techniques designed to increase the effectiveness of one's reading comprehension. These strategies can be used in a variety of contexts and are aware of the reader's own reading comprehension. According to Simpson (2004), strategy relates to learning techniques, behaviours, problem solving or skills that make learning successful.

There are several types of reading strategies that students use to understand a text. Salataci (2002) as quoted in Suebpeng (2017) classifies reading strategies as follows: cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies assist the reader in constructing meaning from the text. He has given a division of cognitive strategies as Bottom-up and Top-down.

By using bottom-up strategy, readers can describe word, sentence by sentence text patterns to find meaning. Bottom-up theory rests on translating from one letter a symbolic representation to another to derive meaning. In conclusion, reading from the bottom-up is the ability to decode letters, sounds, words, and structures to the whole text to understand the meaning of the text. While using top-down strategy is the process by which the reader examines the text, makes assumptions, confirms or rejects it, makes new hypotheses, and so on. This reading strategy explains that the reader brings other sources of knowledge into the reading process. It can be conclude that top-down strategies are predicting, information processing, and background knowledge become significant roles.

Related to these problems, some research questions were formulated for this research:

1. What are the students' difficulties in comprehending narrative text?
2. What strategies do the students use to solve difficulties in comprehending narrative text?

METHOD

There were two instruments used in this study. There were a set of a questionnaire and an interview sheet. A set of a questionnaires were used to collect the data about students' difficulties and strategies in comprehending narrative text, and the interview sheet was used to gain more about students' knowledge and to improve questionnaire responses about narrative text. The researcher began preparing the instrument by adapting a questionnaire from a previous study from Xiubo Yi & Zhang questionnaire (2006) to identify reading difficulties and the Reading Strategy Survey (SORS) developed by Mokhtari and Shuri (2002) questionnaire to identify reading strategies. Overall, there were 20 statements with details of the first 5 statements discussing about reading difficulties, which mean that there were 2 statements discussing about students' strategies in comprehending narrative text. There were seven subcategories of this questionnaire: language knowledge, reading strategy, motivation, background knowledge, reading process, top-down strategies and bottom- up strategies. The questionnaire was written in Indonesian to avoid misunderstanding.

The researcher collected the data on the second-grade students who were studying English in the third semester of MAN 2 Banyuwangi. There were 11 classes, which are five sciences, five societies, and one religion class. The researcher chose students in each class randomly. There are about 30 students in each class, but the researcher only took six students from each science class as the subject to fill out the questionnaire and only one student from

each science class who could represent all the subject's representative as research participants to be interviewed.

After collecting data from the subject, the researcher analyzed the data obtained by reducing, displaying, and drawing conclusions from the data. The questionnaire was the first data that needs to be analyzed. The following is the formula for calculating the percentage of each statement in the questionnaire.

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

Where: P: Percentage

F: Frequency of each questionnaire component response

N: Number of respondents in total

FINDING

This section presents the research findings that the researcher found using questionnaires. This is related to the students' difficulties in comprehending narrative texts at MAN 2 Banyuwangi. After the researcher investigated the students' difficulties in comprehending narrative texts, the researcher finally got some data. The results of the research findings are presented in the description below.

1. Language Knowledge

The students have no difficulty understanding the text even though they do not know the vocabulary used and read every detail of the language so as not to miss important points in order to relate reading ideas in the text. These data are supported by statements from participants A, and C as follows:

"I feel dissatisfied if I did not understand what I read."

"I read slowly so that I can understand the information in the text."

In contrast to the previous participants, participants B and E had different opinions about the above opinion, participant B said that he only read the part that was asked by the question. while participant E said that he often interpreted several words so that it was difficult to understand the text as a whole.

2. Background knowledge

Based on the data that has been collected, the students tend to relate the contents of the reading to their previous knowledge when they read a passage and some words and phrases that contain a certain culture make the students less understand the contents of the reading. Related to the background of the reader, the researcher wants to know the students' basic knowledge of narrative text. Therefore, the researcher asked whether the students knew the types of narrative texts. Based on the answers from all participants, they know various kinds of narrative texts. The answers from participants D and E are as follows:

"I only know some of them like legends, fables, myths and, fairy tales"

"All I know is fables and legends"

3. Motivation

Based on the data of the questionnaire, the students feel they fail to understand the reading when they are not interested in a topic. But there are some of the participants who are not sure whether they are interested in the narrative text. This is stated in the answers of participants B as follows:

"I do not really like reading, because I only read English texts in textbooks, but because the stories are entertaining, I feel more interested in narrative texts than other types of texts."

While participants A and C did not agree with the participants' statements above they argued that:

"I like reading narrative texts because I like reading especially fairy tales or legends."

"I like reading a text especially fable and legends. Because in the schoolbook mostly fable and legends."

4. Reading Strategies

Based on the data, the students cannot predict what they will find next and look for words they don't know in the dictionary. Besides that, the researcher wants to know the students' goal in reading narrative text. Based on the data from interview, according to A, E participant they were that the goals of reading narrative text is to increase a vocabulary and knowledge. The stated are follows:

“I want to increase my vocabulary and I enjoy reading narrative texts rather than other types of texts.”

“Because I want to increase knowledge about vocabulary.”

In contrast participant B are disagree with some statement above because he thinks his goals in reading narrative is to answer the question based on reading the text.

5. Reading Process

In conclusion of the questionnaire's data about this difficulties, the students often forget the beginning of the reading when they read the end. Therefore, the researcher wanted to know further through interviews whether the students knew the structure of the narrative text. Based on participants C, and D believed that they knew the structure of the narrative text.

“In my understanding I only understand the plot, i.e. character recognition, problems and then there are solutions.”

“I know the stucture, there are orientations, complications and resolutions”

In contrast to the previous participant, participants B and E said they did not know the structure as said by participant B, which was continued by participant E:

“I do not know the narratives' structure because a lot to learn in school, so I do not understand the structure.”

“I do not really understand English lessons.”

6. Bottom-up Reading Strategy

Based on the data, the researcher conclude that the students translate the words into their mother tongue and read the text slowly to identify grammatical units in the text to help them understand the text.

7. Top-down Reading Strategy

The researcher come to a conclusion that the students guessed words or phrases they did not know to understand the whole text because they should know about what can help them and reviewed the text they were going to read first and determine the text's length and arrangement before reading the text.

DISCUSSION

Lack of motivation is the first difficulty in reading comprehension because the text is too difficult, boring and students are not interested in the topics discussed in the text. On the other hand, if students are interested in a reading, this may be a very important positive factor that can improve reading skills and open up opportunities for students to read about a wide variety of readings. This supports the theory of Alderson (2000), readers' motivation can affect reading results, which means that students who read with interest will better understand what is read because they will read with enthusiasm.

Second, the respondents discovered that background knowledge was a barrier to comprehending narrative texts. To incorporate new information from a text into their prior understanding, readers draw on background knowledge. It was also supporting the theory by Xiubo (2006) that background knowledge is a condition in which readers discover differences between their prior knowledge and what the author intended in the text. As long as readers do not fully comprehend other relevant cultures, an unfamiliar cultural context and discrepancies between vocabulary knowledge and cultural content knowledge can also lead to reading incomprehension. It also confirms Gunning's (2002) theory that even readers who are familiar with every word in their text can have difficulty understanding words and phrases that are embedded in some cultures.

Language knowledge is the third difficulties to comprehending narrative texts for students. The reader engages with the text by applying their prior knowledge of the subject, as well as their understanding of and expectations of how language functions, to the story's subject matter. According to Krashen and Terrell (1998), difficulties in comprehension may result from a text that contains some unfamiliar words. In addition, all participants said that the goal of reading narrative texts is to increase vocabulary and add insight.

The second finding of this study shows how the students' strategies in understanding narrative texts. According to the findings of the study, the reading strategies that were employed at most on comprehending narrative texts by the participants are the top-down strategies. This is related to the theory from by Sheorey & Mokhtari (2001) employing a top-down strategy, the reviewer inserts information into the text before using their own knowledge or insight to understand the text. It was also supporting the theory by Yousefian (2015) that participants should have goals for their own reflection by thinking about any ideas

or styles of writing in tandem with one another and using the lattice at the back of their knowledge to comprehend and refine their writing.

The bottom-up reading method is the least used for reading narrative text. Most of the participants did not enjoy reading aloud, using slashes to properly separate phrases or even paying attention to tenses. These strategies included reading slowly and attentively to ensure that they understood what they were reading, using reference materials (such as a dictionary) to aid in their comprehension, reading closely in all words and sentences, and translating English into their native language.

To sum up, almost all participants were interested in reading narrative texts to increase their vocabulary and knowledge. Students found it difficult to understand the narrative text and use various strategies to solve it. The difficulties that they faced were motivation, background knowledge, and language knowledge, while the strategies often used by students were the top-down strategy and then the bottom-up strategy

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

After collecting data and analyzing the research findings, the researcher reached two conclusions. First, several aspects, especially in narrative texts, are the main causes of students' reading difficulties. Students consider lack of motivation, lack of background knowledge, lack of language knowledge, inappropriate strategies, and difficulties in the reading process as sources of their reading difficulties. Even though the students had difficulties in reading narrative texts, they had almost the same interests and goals. This is supported by the results of interviews which state that students have a target in reading narrative texts, namely wanting to increase knowledge and vocabulary.

Second, based on this research, it is possible to sum up that the overall reading strategy used by the students is the top-down reading strategy, with the bottom-up reading strategy not far behind. It means that the students employed a strategy in comprehending Narrative texts. In other words, most of the students approached the text from the top down. By using the right strategies, students can reduce their reading time to get the information or knowledge they need. These strategies help students to understand the text they read.

Based on the conclusion above, the researcher presented three suggestions from this study. The first is for English teacher. The teachers should be able to observe students' reading comprehension difficulties and make the students know the strategies they should use

to make them understand the topic they read. Then, teachers can also use this study's findings as a guide for students reading development in the learning process. The researcher hopes that students must read narrative content more frequently in class or outside of class so that they will become familiar with narrative text. In addition, the students should optimize the use of reading strategies that they got to ease them in reading a text, especially narrative text. And the last is for the future researchers, this study is very useful as information in conducting in-depth research related to this study, for example comparing strategies or difficulties between two groups, high-ability students and low-ability students.

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