

PROBLEMS FACED BY ENGLISH STUDENTS ACROSS PROFICIENCY LEVEL IN READING COMPREHENSION

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to identify the students' problems and to investigate the factors causing the problems faced by English students in reading comprehension and it was conducted at English Department of University of Islam Malang in reading comprehension. The method applied was descriptive qualitative. The researcher took chose two students who got the lowest score in reading test, one was the first semester and the second one was the third semester. Interview guide consisting of five aspects of reading determining the main idea, finding reference, understanding vocabulary, making inference, and detail information was used as the instrument for data collection. The data were analyzed in the form of descriptive qualitative analysis using data reduction, display data, and drawing conclusion by narrating the information taken from the interview guide for students. The findings of the study that the problems faced by English students from the first and third semester in English Department of University of Islam Malang were similar. They mainly found problems in determining the main idea, understanding vocabulary and making inference. In line with this, there were several factors affecting the problems in reading comprehension such as difficulty of the material, environment, and the technique of reading.

Keywords: *reading, reading problems, reading comprehension*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most crucial points that should be considered by students. Through reading, they can develop their English vocabulary, get much knowledge, and learn many things. Yukselir (2014) stated that reading is the beneficial one that help student to get new information and also support to student to find out the new experience in reading text that explain about all about envirointment. In line with Mikulecky (2004) reports that reading helps one learn

to think in the new language; it helps one develop a better vocabulary, be more comfortable with written English, and study English when one lives in a non-English-speaking country. Based on this case, the learner has gotten much information about everything that is put in the reading text. Besides, they can find some specific information, know the whole stories, and even entertain themselves in reading, such as folktales, comics, novels, and a short story.

Reading comprehension is something required to read, process, and catch the idea of the content provided. Muawanah (2014) revealed that reading comprehension skill is one of the important factors connected with students' achievement. It can be concluded that a learner who has fulltime in reading will have better achievement.

In line with this Harmer (2003) describes reading comprehension as a product of complex communication between the parts of the text and what readers bring to the reading situation. It means that reading comprehension is a strategy and process of making connection between ideas in the text with student's mind. Moreover, Mikulecky (2004) states that reading comprehension as the manner of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through communication and involvement with written language. It means, reading is process of making the meaning of the text.

Regarding students' problems in reading, they may gain difficulties in learn English reading text caused English is not their mother tongue. Such as, the students obtain problem when the teacher share in the classrom based on the new information or experience. Besides, the learners had to consisted of vocabulary which gain in their reading text. According to Puspita (2017), stated that to determine the problem in scanned the reading text is very important things for teacher and students.

Dealing with the statements above, there are some previous studies related to the students' problem in reading comprehension. The first conducted by Puspita (2017), she investigated students' difficulties in comprehending a text. The qualitative method was adopted in this research. The findings proved that English reading texts were related to unfamiliar vocabularies, unfamiliar contents of the

text, ambiguous pronunciation, reading techniques, and sentence patterns. The second study was carried out by Zuhra (2015) using qualitative and quantitative approach and the subject was the third grade of senior high school in Lhoksemawe. According to result, the finding was found out that the most difficult type of reading comprehension influenced by the students was an inference question, due to students' weakness in different nature of reading comprehension question types. For the quantitative result, 27 % of their answer was the problem of inference category, 23 % belong to weakness in vocabulary mastery, 15 % refer to grammatical complexity, 9 % never read the text, 8 % did not have any background knowledge of the text and 4 % refers to the lesson never taught before.

The previous studies have not carried out the students' problem across proficiency level and the problems faced by the students across proficiency are different. By knowing the student's difficulties, it will help the teacher to find the appropriate teaching method for each level of proficiency to help students improve their ability in reading. Based in this cases, the writer is interested in analyzing the English students' problems in reading comprehension across the proficiency level.

Therefore, this research needs to be more investigated with the title "Problems Faced by English Students Across Proficiency Level in Reading Comprehension".

The research problems were formulated as follows:(1) What are the English students' problems in reading comprehension?(2) What are the factors causing the problem in reading comprehension?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was qualified as a qualitative research. Latief (2017) stated that qualitative research is a rules of analysis purposed to notice human perception by developing the social in nature, complex and culture that was growed in society. The researcher applied descriptive qualitative analysis to expand the result. Besides, it is appropriate with this research since it describes

the students' weakness in comprehending text of English reading which automatically focused at basic reading applied in the first semester and academic reading for the fourth semester.

This study was conducted at first and third-semester students of English Department of University of Islam Malang in the academic years 2019-2020. At the final, the researcher decided the lowest score in the classroom in reading test on each level since the present study wants to investigate what kinds of problems faced by the students in the reading test. The selection was done according to the reading test that those two selected students who got the lowest score in reading test.

The instrument is the interview session, the researcher called a semi-structured interview. The questions consisted of ten questions provided which covered aspects of reading and factors affecting reading comprehension.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994:10), they described that qualitative can be analyzed with three steps: *data reduction*, *data display*, and *drawing a conclusion*.

Data reduction; the researcher took all most information from raw data included from the reading test and interview guide for students. Then, the researcher selected important information and omit irrelevant data.

Data display; after the data being reduced, the researcher displayed the data and explained the main important detail information that had been being selected before writing down in the text. It focused on investigating on reading test and interviewing students.

Drawing conclusion it is the last step of the research. After knowing and narrating the facts the researcher utilize the draw the conclusion. The researcher ensured that the data display was valid to get the accurate conclusions.

FINDINGS

1). The Problems Faced by the Students in Reading Comprehension

The purposes of this research is to investigate the problems of students' in reading comprehension and factors causing the problem in reading comprehension. From the findings, there were problems consist by English students' reading comprehension including students' difficulty to understanding the reading text, lack of vocabulary, lack of reading interest.

The first problem coming from determining the main idea. This problem is one of the problems found by students in understanding the reading text, this problem occurred due to students' low interest in reading long texts. Additionally, determining the main idea is not easy for student because they must read the whole text and understand the main idea at the beginning, middle, or the end of the text. Therefore, it means that the main point is more complicated to discover. From this case, it is related with a theory from Vener (2002) that the main idea is always placed in a sentence, it is usually in the last sentence or the first sentence but it can be in the middle. It is also supported by a theory from Longan (2002) he stated that the main idea is a way to learn a short selection or paragraph.

The second problem coming from understanding vocabulary. This problem is the main problem faced by students because the students do not master vocabulary while vocabulary is very important in helping students to master and understand a text. In fact, most of students have problems in mastering vocabulary, they were lack of vocab mastery to understand the text. Whereas, to know the object of the text, they have to be familiar with the vocabulary which ease to identificate the main idea of the text. At last, to answer every question in a text, the reader should have enough vocabulary to be able to understand the text and determine the main idea in the text that being read. Therefore the learners are required to master vocabularies in the order to be able to answer every question in the text. But in reality, according to the interviews that have been conducted, the

students have limited vocabulary because of laziness in memorizing it, and then as an impact, it became the major obstacles in reading comprehension.

From this case, it is related with the theory from Hedge (2000), he stated that vocabulary mastery is different element of reading level with which language learners will experience difficulty. Based on the results by interviewing conducted, students are very minimal in terms of mastering vocabulary due to laziness and lack of interest in the habit of reading long texts. Therefore, mastering the vocab is helpful in reading activity. In line with this, it is related with a theory from Barfield (1999 as cited in Hidayati, 2018) that shows almost 20 percent in academic text and 12 percent of the students had difficulty in the following long sentence in story. It is clearly stated, vocabulary is very important to be mastered by students.

The last problem on students in understanding reading is making inference. Making conclusions is a problem faced by the students due to the lack of vocabulary. To know the conclusions of the text students must to understand the whole meaning of the text, therefore mastering vocabulary is a very important factor in students' reading comprehension. In some cases, the students are difficult to master the reading text therefore it makes them difficult to make conclusions in overall contents of the text. This finding related to the theory from Kopitski (2007), conducted that to practice combining clues from the text with their background knowledge in order to making inferences required by students. It can concluded that the clues in the text will help students to build assumption. So, the students can answer each question in the text.

From the explanation, the researcher categorized the problems of English students' reading comprehension of the first and third semester of University of Islam Malang including difficulty of the text, lack of reading, and lack of vocabulary.

2). The Factors Affecting Problems in Reading Comprehension

From the interview, the writer found some factors affecting reading comprehension faced by English students such as having difficulty of the material, environment, limited of vocabulary, lack of reading and techniques in reading.

The first factor comes from the difficulty in understanding the reading text. This problem is one of the factors faced by students. this factor happen because the vocabulary provided is too high and the text is too long which makes the reader are lazy to know the contents of the reading. Besides, the lack of vocabulary that students have become the main causes that influence students understanding in a reading. From this case, it is related with a theory from Soebottom (1996), he stated that the written message maybe hard to imitate because it includes several words that are missing to the students.

Then the second factor faced by students is the environment. The environment is important to help the development of informal knowledge, for example is family attention in accustoming their children in reading a book in order to get a variety of knowledge. In line with this case, it is related with a theory from Freeman and Long (1990) conducted that each their parents have to give attention to reach their learning success. Because learning English is not the similar as learning Indonesian language, so that the environment is very influential for students' reading comprehension.

The third factor is lack of reading habit, this factor happen due to the limitless of vocabulary mastery. Besides, students still unfamiliar with strange vocabulary when they read the text, so that it makes students difficult to recognize the contents of the reading. It means that vocabulary one of the most important things that should be mastered by students.

The fourth factor is inaccurate reading techniques. The technique used in reading is one of the factors influence students' understanding such as reading quickly and slowly because not everyone is able to understand the text when they read fast or slow. It is related with theory from Smith (2008) stated that reading the text, the student must use comprehensive reading strategies such as connections and activating prior knowledge and content questioning, making inferences and specific strategies including drawing on subject specific information to make meaning of the text. It means that reading strategies are useful for the students to comprehend the text.

The last factor is lack of vocabulary, lack of vocabulary is a major problem faced by students because vocabulary is very important in understanding every word or sentence. Based on interviews that have been done, the main problem faced by students is the lack of vocabulary. This finding related to the theory from Huckin (1995 as cited Wulandary,2016) pointed out that the largest difficulty that second language learners have to master is lack of vocabulary. It is clearly stated, that vocabulary is a crucial factor that must be mastered by students in order to help them recognizing the contents of the text well and be able to answer each question correctly.

Surprisingly, there is a new finding that problems faced by English students of first and third semester are same. According to interview session the students have some equal reason that there are some problems faced by students in reading comprehension such as there are several factors affecting their reading comprehension such as difficult of the material, limited of vocabulary, lack of reading , family environment, and reading techniques and determining the main idea, understanding vocabulary, and making inference. It is based on the results of score students in reading test and interview session was done by researcher.

Related to the results of the reading test analysis, it turns out that the mistakes made by the first and third-semester students are the same. This related by one of their answers in the items which determine the main idea. The reading test found out that the difficulties faced by students. Evidently, in the fact is students from the third semester still have the same problem with the first semester students even though the level of learning is very different where the third semester is at the academic reading level while the first semester is basic reading. From the results of the analysis students from the third semester still have problems in basic skills whereas to mastery each level the students should mastery basic skills to help them master the next level. In line with this, Bernhardt (1991) noted that the mastery basic level is the essential thing and of second language modalities. It means that basic reading is crucial thing for reading mastery.

Based on the findings and discussion of the research, some conclusions can be drawn. First, the problems faced by English students from the first and third semester in English Department of University of Islam Malang are similar, which those are understanding vocabulary, determining the main idea, and making inference. In line with this there are several factors affecting in reading comprehension faced by English students such as difficulty of the material, environment, and technique of reading.

This findings related to the theory in the chapter two by Nuttal (1982) who found that there are five aspects in reading such as finding reference, understanding vocabulary, making inference, determining the main idea, and detail information. It means that problems faced by English students in reading comprehension are same with theory in chapter two such as determining the main idea, understanding vocabulary, and making inference. In line with this, there several factors affecting problem in reading comprehension namely difficulty of material, environment, and reading technique. From this case, related with theory Dallmann (1982) conducted that factors which are responsible to depth of readers' comprehension such as emphasis on recognition, the difficulty of material, intelligence, emphasis on oral reading, background of reading selection, environment, adjustment of reading, techniques and rate of reading.

These findings in line with the previous study from Puspita (2017) and Zuhra (2015). In the research that conducted by Puspita (2017) entitled *“Difficulties in Reading Comprehending English Reading Text at second Grade Students of SMA N 2 Metro.”* Found that there are five problems faced by students in comprehending English reading text such as reading techniques, unfamiliar contents of the text, ambiguous pronouns, unfamiliar vocabulary, and sentence patterns. The second previous study by Zuhra (2015) entitled *“Senior High School Students Difficulties In Reading Comprehension”*. found that most difficult type of reading comprehension question by students was an inference question because they did not understand and comprehend the questions that asked.

Evidently, that senior high school students, the first and third-semester basic problems are the same. It can be found that something is wrong in teaching

process reading subjects. This is evident from the main problem indicated by students in the first and third semester, namely the lack of vocabulary and lazy reading long texts. Therefore, future research is suggested to involve more participants with different level to provide better generalization. In addition, it is worth to recommend that more detailed issues related to the students problems and factors affecting in reading comprehension are discussed in the next research.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to investigate the factors causing the English students to face difficulties and the students' problems in reading comprehension. Based on the findings which were obtained from the participants, this investigation found that the problems faced by English students from the first and third semester in English Department of University of Islam Malang are similar. They mainly found problems in determining the main idea, understanding vocabulary, making inference. In line with this, there are several factors affecting the problems in reading comprehension such as difficulty of the material, environment, and the technique of reading.

SUGGESTION

Therefore, future research is suggested to find any resources, such as used questionnaire to get deeper the students problems in reading comprehension by using more than one instrument and involving more participants with different level by means of providing better generalization. In addition, it is worth to recommend that more detailed issues related to the students' problems and factors affecting the problem in reading comprehension are discussed in the next research.

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