An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Reading Comprehension on Narrative Text

Inkholisatun Nafsiah

English Department, Lampung University, Lampung, Indonesia

Abstract:
Background: Reading skill becomes very important in the education field because it provides many useful information and the students need to be trained in order to have a good reading skill. In addition, reading is also something crucial and indispensable for the students because the success of their study depends on the greater part of their skill to read. For instance, if their reading skill is poor they are very likely to fail in their study or at least they will have difficulty in making progress. On the other hand, if they have a good skill in reading, they will have a better chance to succeed in their study.
Materials and Methods: The study was conducted at the Sixth Grade of MIT Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung consisted of 46 students. The instrument of this research is reading comprehension test. The researcher analyzed the data descriptively.
Results: The result showed that 75% of the students got difficulty to find inference meaning. Yet, the students were able to determine the reference meaning easily. It was proved by their score in reading comprehension test. There were 65.56 % of the students that answer correctly.
Conclusion: The most difficult aspects of reading comprehension encountered by students of MIT Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung is finding inference meaning.
Key Word: Narrative text; Reading comprehension; Students' difficulties.

I.   Introduction

Essentially, reading is one of language skills that should be learned by the students. The purpose of learning reading is to comprehend the writer's ideas or the way the writer communicates with the readers by the written or printed words. Besides, reading is important for the students in order to find out the available information in a passage. Also, reading means to learn various written symbols, simultaneous association of these symbols with existing knowledge and comprehension of the information. In other words, reading is the combination of word recognition, intellect, and emotion interrelated with prior knowledge to understand the message communicated. Considering the needs of mastering reading as one of the ways for mastering English, Harmer (2001) states "reading is taught from Islamic Junior High School to university by using many kinds of methods applied by English teachers". Reading comprehension is defined as the process of making meaning by coordinating a number of complex processes that involve language, word reading, word knowledge, and fluency (Cain, Oakhill, & Bryant, 2004). According to Joffee, Cain, and Maric (2007), text comprehension includes processing at various levels. The reader makes a semantic network of opinions as they try to identify the meaning of a text. The reader uses language and visual skills to decode words and combine words and phrases that construct meaning. That is, links and syntactic connections are shaped, revised, and revisited in the reading process as a means for making and keeping coherence. Ahmadi and Pourhosein (2012) expressed that reading comprehension is a cooperative mental practice between a reader's linguistic knowledge (knowledge of the world) and knowledge about a given subject. Reading comprehension is a communicating procedure in which readers interact with the text as their background knowledge is activated. It can be concluded that reading is a process of reacting and understanding a written text as a piece of communication. Reading does not necessarily need to look everything in a given piece of text. It is important to comprehend genre in order to catch the information and message in written text. Text comprehension is related to reading skill, as reading is one of the important skills in order to communicate using English to fulfill daily needs such as reading newspaper, instruction, rule, book, advertisement, magazine etc.

There was a previous study that has similarity to this research which was conducted by Zuhra (2015). The research was about Senior High School Students Difficulties in Reading Comprehension. The objectives of this study were to find out the most difficult types of reading comprehension questions faced by students in reading tests and why they face these difficulties in the national examinations. Her thesis was a case study at second grade of senior high school. In result, she found that most difficult type of reading comprehension

---

question faced by the students was an inference question because they did not comprehend the questions asked. It happened because of their weaknesses in distinguishing between the nature of different types in reading comprehension questions.

Likewise, Hidayati (2018), she also conducted a research in Senior High School 1 Darussalam Aceh Besar. After analyzing the data gained from the test, the writer concluded that the first grade students of Senior High School 1 Darussalam have difficulties in answering reading comprehension test. From five types of reading comprehension question, three types of them were categorized as difficult question types for the students. The difficulties faced by the students are difficulty in answering main idea questions (74%), making inferences questions (56%), and locating reference questions (71%). Therefore, the most difficult aspect faced by the first grade students was reading for getting main idea with (74%). As the result, most of the students had difficulty in achieving the standard grade for reading comprehension test. It can be seen from the mean score of the students (70) for reading comprehension test. In brief, it can be said that there is various difficulties aspect in comprehending reading passage. It was because of their weaknesses in distinguishing between the natures of different types in reading comprehension questions. However, to know the difficulties in reading comprehension is important in order to determine appropriate method or technique to the students. The problems are faced by the students might be different in one school to another school. This research was conducted at MIT Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung. Be based on the description above, the aims of this research are (1) To know the percentages of students' difficulties which are made by the students in reading comprehension. (2) To know the most difficult aspects of reading comprehension encountered by students of MIT Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung.

II. Material And Methods

The methods that was used in this research was descriptive quantitative. Descriptive quantitative research is scientific investigation which explains phenomena by using numbers. In this study, the researcher described the students difficulties in reading comprehension at the sixth grade of MIT Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung. The researcher observed two classes in the same grade. The subjects of this research consisted of 46 students both male and female. In this research, the writer collected the data by using reading comprehension test. The researcher would give the test of reading to know their understanding in comprehending the text. The test for reading was about 50 items. The time was 2 x 45 minutes and the kind of test in this research was multiple choices. The researcher gave reading test to the students to measure the students' comprehensibility in reading. By giving the reading test, the researcher tried to find out whether the students could answer the test well or not. The right and the wrong answer from the students were used as an indicator whether the students find the difficulties or not.

In this research, the researcher would find out the levels of frequency and percentage of the students' difficulties in all students' difficulty. The students were analyzed by giving the score 1 for the correct answer and 0 for incorrect answer. Then the total of the score will be calculated by using Arikunto's formula (2008):

Where :

$$S = \frac{R}{N} \text{ x } 100\%$$

S = Correct Percentage
R = Correct answers
N = Total Questions

To find out describing the level of students difficulties in reading English text the result percentage were categorized into four classifications, they are highest, high, medium, and low.

The classifications were as follows:

1. If the students' incorrect answer is about 76 – 100 %, it is categorized that their difficulties in reading narrative text is Highest.
2. If the students' incorrect answer is about 56 – 75%, it is categorized that their difficulties in reading narrative text is High.
3. If the students' incorrect answer is about 40 - 55%, it is categorized that their difficulties in reading narrative text is Medium.
4. If the students' incorrect answer is about 0 – 39%, it is categorized that their difficulties in reading narrative text is Low.

III. Result

The reading comprehension tests of this research are formulated by the concept of reading comprehension stated by Nuttal (1982). They are determining main idea, finding supporting details, finding inference meaning, finding reference, and understanding vocabulary.

**Table no 1:** Specification for Reading Comprehension Test

No.	Reading Skills	Items Number	Percentage of Item
1	Determining main idea	2, 7, 11, 16, 31, 32, 35, 40, 45, 48	20%
2	Finding supporting details	3, 6, 10, 12, 14, 15, 25, 36, 41, 47	20%
3	Finding inference meaning	1, 4, 17, 22, 23, 26, 27, 42, 44, 46	20%
4	Finding reference	5, 8, 13, 18, 21, 29, 30, 41, 43, 50	20%
5	Understanding vocabulary	9, 19, 20, 24, 28, 33, 34, 38, 39, 49	20%
Total		**50 Items**	**100%**

The researcher conducted a reading comprehension test in order to know the level of students' difficulties in comprehending reading English text. The results are as follows:

Table no 2: Specification for Reading Comprehension Test

No.	Aspect of Reading Skills	Right Answer (%)	Wrong Answer (%)
1	Determining main idea	48 %	52 %
2	Finding supporting details	65.56 %	34.44 %
3	Finding inference meaning	25 %	75 %
4	Finding reference	72 %	28 %
5	Understanding vocabulary	31 %	69 %

Be based on the table above, we could infer that; first, the students got the most difficulty in finding inference meaning. There were 75% of the students that answered wrongly in the inference meaning. Second, there were 69% of the students that answered wrongly in the vocabulary aspect. It means that it is categorized that their difficulties in reading descriptive text (inference and vocabulary aspects) are high. Third, there were 52% of the students that answered wrongly in determining main idea. Their difficulties in determining ideas are still medium. Meanwhile, the students do not get any difficulties in finding supporting detail and reference. It is showed by the students that got wrong answer only 34.44% in supporting detail and 28% in understanding vocabulary. In order to get more understanding and specific information about the students' difficulties in reading comprehension, the researcher showed the percentage by using this following graph.
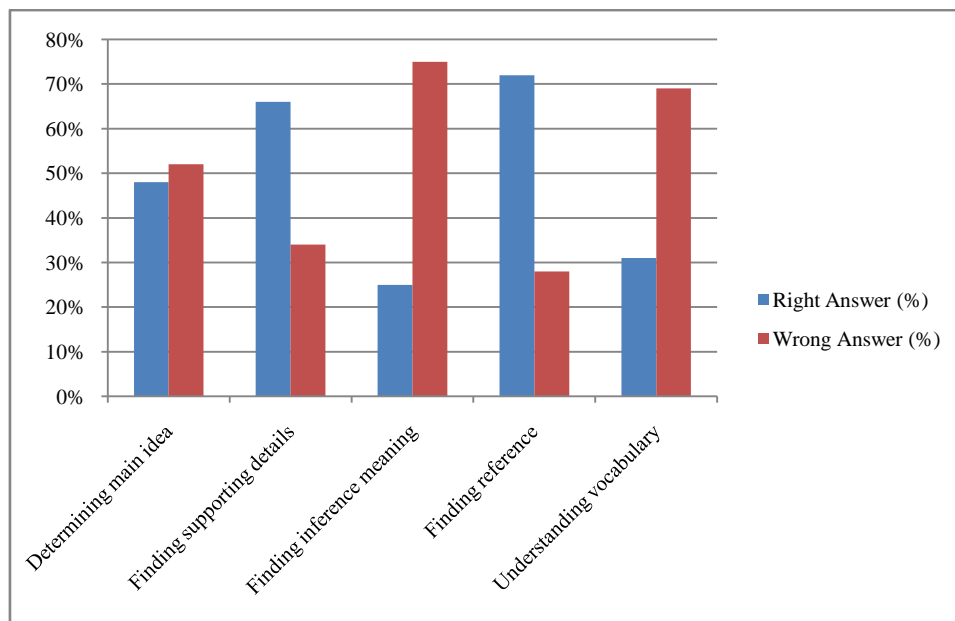
Table no 3: The Students' Result of Five Aspects of Reading Comprehension

Be based on students' result, the most difficult aspects of reading comprehension encountered by students of MIT Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung is finding inference meaning.

IV. Discussion

The finding showed that the students got difficulty in finding inference meaning. It was related o the research which conducted by Zuhra (2015), she found that most difficult type of reading comprehension question faced by the students was an inference question because they did not comprehend the questions asked. Thus, the first idea that the students should learn from descriptive text is inference meaning. Inference is one of comprehension strategies to make conclusion about what is not directly stated in the text based on clues given. To making inference is to come to a conclusion after considering all the fact (Suparman, 2012). Sometimes, the information is not given directly. Example question of making inference can be*: What is the first paragraph talking about?*

Also, the students got difficulty in understanding the vocabulary. According to (Machado, 2012), child vocabulary is strongly related to his comprehension and ease of learning to read. Reading comprehension involves applying letter sound correspondence to a pretend word and matching it to a known word in the readers' oral vocabulary. Many studies agree that reading skill and vocabulary size are related. Considerable study suggests that a small vocabulary is one major determinant of poor reading comprehension. The question consisting vocabulary aspect can be drawn as follows: *"he is **famous**." (paragraph 2). The bold word is the synonym of...*

As we see from the table 2 in the results, the students' score in finding inference meaning and understanding vocabulary were low enough. Yet, they have less difficulty in finding reference meaning and supporting detail. Simply, they have average percentage in determining main idea.

V. Conclusion

Based on the data, the teacher should introduce the content of the reading before the students have to read text. Thus, it will help the students to comprehend the reading passage especially finding the inference meaning. However, frequent practice in reading and doing reading comprehension test may assist the students to have reliable comprehension and be familiar with the reading test, so it may minimize the students' difficulties in reading comprehension test. Meanwhile, for the teachers, it is expected that they teach the students how to improve their ability in reading comprehension, especially skill and strategies in reading comprehension test in order to help the students to overcome difficulties in reading comprehension of English text. The teacher should provide an interesting material to improve students reading ability, such as providing the students with authentic material. It is suggested that teachers need to apply various teaching techniques in teaching reading in order to achieve better reading comprehension.

References

[1]. Ahmadi, M. R., & Pourhosein Gilakjani, A. (2012). Reciprocal Teaching Strategies and Their Impacts on English Reading Comprehension. Theory *and Practice in Language Studies*, *2*(10), 2053-2060.
[2]. Arikunto, S. (2008). Manajemen Penelitian. Jakarta: PT. Rineka Cipta
[3]. Cain, K. J., Oakhill, J., & Bryant, P. (2004). Children's Reading Comprehension Ability: Concurrent Prediction by Working Memory, Verbal Ability, and Component Skills. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 96*(1), 31-42.
[4]. Harmer J. 2001. *The Practical of English Language Teaching*, Third Addition. England and Associated Company: Longman.
[5]. Hidayati, Dasrul. 2018. "Students Difficulties in Reading Comprehension at the First Grade of SMAN 1 Darussalam Aceh Besar." (Unpublished Thesis) Banda Aceh: Ar-Raniry State Islamic University
[6]. Joffe, V., Cain, K., & Maric, N. (2007). Comprehension Problems in Children with Specific Language Impairment: Does Mental Imagery Training Help? *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders, 42*(6), 648-664.
[7]. Machado, J. M. 2012. *Early Childhood Experiences in Language Arts: Early Literacy*. Canada: Nelson Education.
[8]. Nuttal, C. 1982. *Teaching Reading Skill in a Foreign Language*. London: Heinermann Educational Books
[9]. Zuhra. (2015). Senior High School Students Difficulties In Reading Comprehension. English Education Journal (EEJ), 6(3), 424-441