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THE STUDENT'S CHALLENGES IN LEARNING READING COMPREHENSION AT SMP NEGERI 1 MEMPAWAH HULU

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the challenges faced by students of SMP Negeri 1 Mempawah Hulu in reading comprehension and the factors that influence it. This study applies a descriptive method with qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. A closed questionnaire survey was conducted on 30 grade VIII students selected using purposive sampling techniques, while semi-structured interviews were conducted on four students to strengthen the results of the study.

The results showed that grade VIII students faced difficulties in understanding texts and identifying main ideas. In addition, the lack of motivation to learn English contributed to the low motivation of students to improve their reading skills. One of the main factors that causes difficulties in reading comprehension is the lack of extensive reading activities. This limitation has an impact on students' ability to identify important information and connect various parts of a text to understand the arguments presented.

This study is expected to provide insight for English teachers regarding the challenges faced by students and the factors that contribute to their difficulties in reading comprehension, so that they can help in designing more effective teaching strategies.

Keywords*: Descriptive, Students' Challenges, English Reading Comprehension*

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a person's ability to develop and derive meaning from written language, such as understanding and analyzing information contained in a text. This process involves various skills such as understanding vocabulary, identifying main ideas, drawing conclusions, and evaluating text structure. This process involves mentally understanding the meaning of words and phrases, which requires adequate vocabulary mastery. Through reading comprehension, a person can play an important role in everyday life and academic environments. In the field of education, reading comprehension is the foundation for learning various fields of science, where a person can gain insight and improve critical thinking skills. According to (Sari, & Astriyanti, 2023), Most students are interested in reading, but there are also many students who are not interested in reading, and there are also many students who are not interested in reading because they have difficulty understanding and lack understanding of the material. So, this is a big problem which may be caused by several factors such as background information, lack of vocabulary and sentences structure.

Reading comprehension is very important for students because reading allows students to obtain new information and knowledge from various sources and can improve students' critical thinking skills. Therefore, reading comprehension is not only a basic skill, but also an important foundation for students' academic and personal development. The point is that reading comprehension is not just about understanding the word is a sentence, but about gaining knowledge, developing critical thinking strategies and understanding. Comprehension strategies are very useful in a text, both long and complex texts, readers have many choices in reading comprehension which are directed at a particular goal, therefore a strategy is a conscious and goal-oriented plan so it requires varied tactics starting from underlining words it takes a long time to create a mental simulation to see if the author is right.

The purpose of reading comprehension is to understand, analyze, and interpret information conveyed through text. This involves the ability to grasp meaning, draw conclusions, recognize main ideas and important details, and relate new information to existing knowledge. With good reading comprehension, a person can use the information effectively in various contexts, such as in learning, decision-making, and communication. The main purpose of this reading activity requires readers to interact and engage with written language. The goal is to create meaning or understanding of the message the author wants to convey. In addition, readers also need to remember what they have read and be able to interact with the reading text.

One of the phenomena in reading comprehension challenge that occurred at SMP Negeri 1 Mempawah Hulu shows that some students experience problems in reading comprehension. There are many other obstacles that students face, such as long sentences or complicated sentence structures which can make students have difficulty understanding the relationship between ideas, lacking more motivation or interest in the topic, difficulty in identifying relevant information, and a lack of effective reading strategies. It can be concluded that what affects reading comprehension in grade 8 students is that many students have difficulty in understanding texts due to the limitations of their understanding, lack of motivation or interest in reading materials can affect their ability to understand texts in depth, and also the existence of learning conditions that are not supportive, such as distractions or disturbances can of course affect concentration in reading comprehension.

According to Hidayati (2018), she also conducted a study on the difficulties faced by students and the factors that influence reading comprehension in grade I students of SMA

Negeri 1 Darussalam Aceh. The results of the study showed that most students had difficulty answering questions related to the main idea, drawing conclusions, and finding references in the questions. The biggest difficulty faced by students is finding the main idea in the text, because its location is difficult to identify.

Previous related studies in the field has motivated researchers to examine the challenges student's face when reading English. The researchers conducted research entitled "The Student's Challenges in Learning Reading Comprehension ". This research is different from previous research in terms of research location and courses used in the research. This research focuses on SMP Negeri 1 Mempawah Hulu. The researcher made initial observations and consulted with the teacher who taught in this research class to explain the reasons behind students' challenges in reading comprehension, while the problem was because of the were sentences that were too long. Long sentences have a long structure. This causes students to have difficulty getting a coherent interpretation of the text because of the many complex structures, resulting in difficulties in organizing meaningful structures, resulting in difficulties in organizing meaning structures. Researchers stated that the lack of understanding may be caused by a lack of vocabulary knowledge. Lack of understanding of the structure, lack of direct impact on their reading ability. They key to achieving fluency in reading lies in the number of words in the language.

METHOD

The research employed a structured plan that combines qualitative and quantitative descriptive methods to investigate challenges in reading comprehension. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research aims to deeply understand social phenomena through methods such as interviews, observation, and document analysis. Meanwhile, quantitative research focuses on analyzing numerical data to draw conclusions, emphasizing objectivity as highlighted by Syaodih (2006). This combination of methods was chosen to explore the challenges and underlying factors affecting students' reading comprehension.

The subjects of the study were 30 students from class VIII B at SMP Negeri 1 Mempawah Hulu during the 2023/2024 academic year. The researcher specifically selected this class using purposive sampling, as initial observations revealed significant challenges in reading comprehension among the students. This approach, as described by Hikmawati (2020), ensures that sampling focuses on specific objectives rather than randomness or stratification.

Data collection involved direct and indirect communication techniques using closed-ended questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire, based on a Likert scale, aimed to measure students' responses to reading comprehension challenges, with options ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Interviews provided deeper insights into students' challenges, offering perspectives that are not easily captured through questionnaires alone. These interviews, as described by Esterberg (2002), were systematic yet conversational, designed to explore the underlying issues thoroughly.

For data analysis, both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied. Interview data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (2014) framework, which involves three stages: data reduction to summarize and focus on relevant information, data display to organize and visualize findings, and conclusion drawing to interpret and address research objectives. Questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, employing a percentage formula to quantify responses and identify trends in students' challenges. This dual approach allows researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges students face and the factors that contribute to their challenges in reading comprehension.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted on eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Mempawah Hulu, Landak, West Kalimantan, to identify the challenges students face in understanding English reading texts and the factors contributing to these challenges. The data were collected through closed questionnaires and structured interviews, which revealed various aspects of students' challenges in reading comprehension.

The results show that students' text comprehension skills are very low. Many students have difficulty understanding formal or academic language, are less interested in reading topics, and have difficulty understanding implied meanings in the text. Another obstacle is the lack of detailed understanding of the text, such as sentence structure and vocabulary, resulting in an inability to understand the information as a whole. Students are also challenged to connect ideas between paragraphs, understand the relationship between examples and main ideas, and identify connectors in the text.

In addition, students' ability to draw conclusions is still lacking, many admit that they have difficulty guessing the meaning or flow of a text. This problem is exacerbated by their limited ability to understand the main idea of the text due to lack of background knowledge, lack of interest in reading, and lack of support from teachers and parents.

In conclusion, the biggest challenges students face in reading are a lack of detailed text comprehension and difficulty in identifying main ideas. These issues are caused by their inability to capture key information, understand concepts, and connect ideas in texts, compounded by low motivation to learn.

The study identifies several factors contributing to challenges in reading comprehension among eighth-grade students, derived from interviews with four respondents. A significant issue is the lack of extensive reading, where students exhibit low reading interest and minimal engagement with books or other materials. This is exacerbated by inadequate library facilities, uninteresting reading materials, and unsupportive environments at school and home. Limited vocabulary knowledge also hinders comprehension, as students often rely on memorization rather than understanding, and many lack exposure to diverse vocabulary due to ineffective teaching methods and insufficient active reading practices.

Another factor is the challenges in understanding text types, as some students struggle to identify the purpose and function of various texts, often due to limited exposure to diverse materials and teaching methods that fail to address their proficiency levels. While some students show interest in specific types of texts, such as narratives, others remain disengaged, which impedes their comprehension. Lastly, a lack of fluency poses challenges, with students often reading slowly and struggling to process words and sentence structures effectively. This lack of fluency is linked to low self-confidence, limited practice, and fear of making mistakes, further diminishing their motivation to engage with reading activities. Collectively, these factors underline the need for improved teaching strategies, better learning resources, and supportive environments to enhance students' reading comprehension skills.

CONCLUSION

The findings and discussions, with the responses of students who have answered several challenges faced in reading comprehension in English, it can be concluded that the most common thing faced by students is feeling less understanding text details, less text understanding ability, unable to connecting ideas, difficulty making inferences and not having the ability to identifying main idea. These are the challenges faced by students in reading comprehension. After answering the challenges faced by students, they also answered that there are several factors that are challenges in reading comprehension, the first

is reading that is not extensive enough so that students are unable to understand the contents of the reading, and the lack of support from other parties, teachers and parents in learning English. The second is disappointing lexical development, This is also what makes students often feel confused and unclear when reading English texts. The third is connecting thinking, which is also a factor in students not being able to think well, which causes their poor understanding of their own thought patterns Think well. Understand that this is also one of the factors in students' poor reading comprehension, which makes students unable to concentrate when reading long English texts and obscures reading fluency.

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