INVESTIGATING THE STUDENTS' READING DIFFICULTIES IN UNDERSTANDING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT TO THE EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS OF SMPS AWALUDDIN PONTIANAK

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui kesulitan yang dihadapi oleh Siswa Kelas Delapan di SMPS Awaluddin Pontianak dalam memahami membaca teks deskriptif. Subyek dalam penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas VIII SMPS. Awaluddin Pontianak yang berjumlah 17 orang siswa tahun ajaran 2023/2024. Selanjutnya, penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian deskriptif. Selain itu, dalam pengumpulan data disebarkan kuesioner yang berisi 15 pernyataan dengan skala likert. Berdasarkan temuan penelitian, dibagi menjadi empat aspek. Hasil terendah sebagian besar siswa kurang berminat dengan frekuensi 29,40%. Sedangkan 52,90% diantaranya menantang pada materi topik. Kemudian persepsi tertinggi sebesar 64,70% diantaranya sulit dengan kalimat yang panjang disertai kata-kata yang asing. Kemudian persepsi terakhir pada kegiatan pembelajaran dengan nilai tertinggi yaitu 70,60% siswa menyebutkan bahwa sekolah masih mengalami kekurangan pada sarana dan prasarana seperti bahan ajar, media terkait. Temuan lain juga mengungkapkan bahwa siswa kesulitan dalam berbagai aspek pemahaman membaca, termasuk menentukan gagasan utama, mengidentifikasi referensi, membuat kesimpulan, merinci informasi, dan menafsirkan kosa kata.

Kata Kunci: Kualitatif Deskriprif, Kesulitan Siswa, Pemahaman Membaca

Abstract

This research was conducted to finding out the difficulties were faced by the Eight Grade Students at SMPS Awaluddin Pontianak in understanding reading descriptive text. The subjects in this research was eight grade students at SMPS. Awaluddin Pontianak which was consisted of 17 students in academic year 2023/2024. Furthermore, this research employed a descriptive study. Based on the research findings, it has been divided into four aspects. The lowest result most students lack of interest with the frequency of 29.40%. Meanwhile, 52.90% of them was challenging in topic material. Then, the highest perception was 64.70% of them was difficult with long sentences along with unfamiliar words. Then the last perception in learning activities with the highest scores were 70.60% of students mentioned that the school still experiences deficiencies in facilities and infrastructure such as teaching materials, relevant media. The other findings also revealed that students struggled with various aspects of reading comprehension, including determining the main idea, identifying references, making inferences, detailing information, and interpreting vocabulary.

Keywords: *Descriptive Qualitative, Students' Difficulties, Understanding Reading*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the four language skills taught in the process of learning English, aside from listening, speaking, and writing. However, every reading skill consider as the most important skill. Snow (2013) claimed that reading is a complex developmental challenge that we know to be intertwined with many other developmental accomplishments: attention, memory, language, and motivation, for example. Reading is not only a cognitive psycholinguistic activity but also a social activity. It is reasonable to say that people's daily lives and reading activities are interrelated, because reading is beneficial not only in education, but also in social and professional settings.

According to Harmer (2017) states that reading and listening are called receptive skill. Therefore, it should be developed and learned properly by students, because It is a crucial form used to accept any information. The readers are not necessary to comprehend every detail of each phrase or paragraph, but they must comprehend the message the author is attempting to express. As mentioned by Meliasari, R., Sunita, A., Sahrawi, dkk (2023) the complex process of fully understanding the meaning and content contained in a text is known as reading comprehension. This goes beyond simply taking information from the text and includes interpreting its meaning, developing a deeper understanding, and summarizing its main points. Gaining more knowledge and comprehension requires having a strong grasp of text.

Since English in Indonesia is a foreign language, there are possibilities that the English language students may get difficulties in understanding reading text, it may be because of faulty word identification and recognition, limited special comprehension abilities, or poor oral reading. These issues are as follows: the code or alphabet symbol, vocabulary and sentence structure, cohesive devices and discourse markers, challenges beyond plain sense, and ideas. All of these issues are most likely due to the fact that Indonesian students' primary language differs from English in terms of form, sound, vocabulary, and structure.

Furthermore, the researcher chose the title of this study because the researcher believes it is vital to do research on this topic since each student will

have distinct difficulties in digesting the reading descriptive text. Knowing how important it is for students to understand text in order to improve their reading skills, these difficulties in understanding reading text should be identified and resolved by both the students and the teacher, because the difficulties will have a negative impact on the students' ability and motivation to meet the reading goal. Rizki Asani (2022) also noted that a number of reading issues and challenges faced by EFL learners, including inadequate reading methods, deficits in vocabulary and background knowledge, problems with grammatical understanding, and issues with problems with background knowledge. Furthermore, it can be claimed that the majority of learners struggle with reading because they lack the specialized skills required for effective reading.

Moreover, Jayanti in Rizki Asani (2022) reveals that Indonesian secondary students often find difficulties in reading the information from texts. In contrast to the condition above, the newest Indonesian curriculum, the 2013 curriculum under the Regulation of the Ministry of Education and Culture 2013 of the Basic Competence of Senior High School and Junior High School mandates that Indonesian secondary students must comprehend various English texts such as recount, report, narrative and descriptive texts effectively (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013).

Based on the statement above, the researcher is interested to "Investigating the students' reading difficulties in understanding Descriptive text." especially in the field of English education. The objective of this research was "To find out the difficulties faced by the Eight Grade Students at SMPS Awaluddin Pontianak in understanding reading descriptive text". This research also will be limited by focusing on students' reading difficulties in understanding descriptive text.

There are a variety of definitions of reading offered by various experts. According to Seidenberg (2013) reading is frequently regarded as an afterthought to spoken language and of little linguistic value. True, reading available, it became as essential a manifestation of human linguistic ability as did not develop with the species, but once the technology became widely speaking, drastically altering the ways in which language may be employed. The capacity to extract

information from a written page and interpret it correctly. Without quibbling over the precise language of such a definition, it is insufficient as a means of comprehending the fundamental nature of reading abilities.

The difficulty is the mistakes which are faced by the students in teaching and learning process. It occurs because the students are confused or do not know or understand about the material which the teacher has explained. In this case, difficulty is the state that the students are hard to comprehend English reading text. According to Nuttal (2008), four parts of reading difficulties should be fully understood by students: determining the main idea, understanding vocabulary, making inferences, and detailing information. These elements are regarded as obstacles that students face when reading the text.

Before beginning to read, it is necessary to understand the goal of reading, or why the reading is being done. According to Shihab (2011), the efficacy of the reading is considerably enhanced when the purpose is known. The efficacy of the reading is considerably enhanced when the purpose is known. Also, knowing why you're reading might help you choose the optimal reading style for the job.

The significances of the study are expected by the writer to be able to give benefits, it is hoped that the study may be a guide for further researchers to improve the students' reading skills from English text. The significances of this research expected to provide some advantages for English teaching and learning process. Can find out about students’ reading problem in understanding English text, and it also can help teachers to find out the elements that need to consider in teaching reading.

There are some related relevant of previous studies that have been carried out by other researchers at different subjects, times, places, and academic levels and so on. The first research was done by Annisa, Syam, & Mannong (2023) under the title; ‘'Investigating the students’ reading difficulties in understanding English text. The purpose of this study is to identify the difficulties faced by the eighth grades students of SMP Negeri 3 CAMBA, as well as the factors causing the students' problems understanding English reading text. The result of the research shows that students who have difficulties in understanding to look for the

main idea of the text, understanding the vocabulary of the text, difficulties in understanding and making inferences from the text, struggle to understand where in the text to go for the specific information. The students' inability to comprehend the meaning of words in English reading text has been identified as the main contributing factor. In addition, Satriani (2018) under the title; ‘’reading comprehension difficulties encountered by English students of Universitas Islam Riau’’. She had mentioned in her research found most of students’ difficulties in reading comprehension because they have not motivation in reading habit, they read a little or nothing. It is considered to be a problem for the students to comprehend a reading text. The other finding was students’ difficulties in reading comprehension was the low reading skill.

From the several previous research above, there are the differences and the similarities to this study; The similarity of this study in the previous research above is to analyze the students' difficulties in understanding English reading text as a step to improve students' reading ability. The difference between the previous studies before are; the level of students and place, the researcher takes the sample of junior high school at SMPS Awaluddin Pontianak, and the researcher focus in particularly the students’ reading difficulties in understanding descriptive text. In addition, the instrument of the researchers above used interview and observation. Whereas, in this research will use one of data collection, it is questionnaire.

METHOD

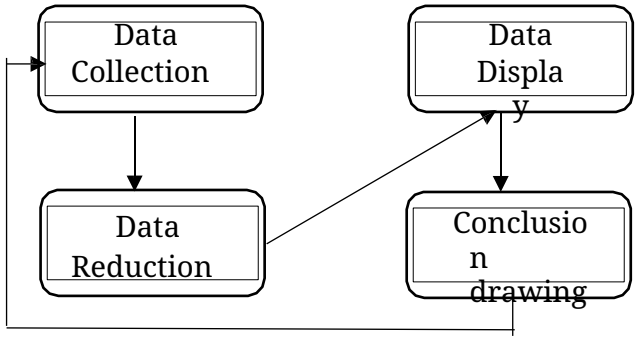
In this current study, a qualitative research paradigm is taken to investigating the students' reading difficulties in English text. Then, a descriptive qualitative approach had been applied. Qualitative research is research that intends to understand the phenomena of what is experienced by the subject of research such as behaviour, perception, motivation, action, and others holistically and by way of description in the form of words and language, in a special natural context by utilizing various natural methods (Moleong, 2017). In addition, descriptive method is a method of research carried out to make sense of a situation or event,

as well as a relationship between the phenomena being investigated systematically, factually, and accurately (Miswati, 2023).

This recent research will be conducted at eight grade students of SMPS Awaluddin Pontianak in the academic year of 2024/2025. The eight grade students at SMPS Awaluddin will be selected to be a subject of the study based on the earlier explanation in the background of the study that the students will have distinct difficulties in digesting the reading descriptive text. Knowing how important it is for students to understand text in order to improve their reading ability, these difficulties in understanding reading text should be identified and resolved by both the students and the teacher, because the difficulties will have a negative impact on the students' ability and motivation to meet the reading goal. Based on these criteria, it is appropriate to find an effective investigation related to students' reading difficulties in English descriptive text.

In this current stage, the researcher steps to collect data. Collecting data is the activity of obtaining data as intended for research purposes. The data here is a phenomenon that is directly related to the problem of study. Data collection techniques in qualitative research can be done using natural techniques, such as observation techniques, interviews, and document study. In this research, to get the data, the researcher applies questionnaire for students. Meanwhile, in data analysis of qualitative research refers to the kind of analyzing data that is very important to gain the result from the investigation (Mulis, 2019). To analyze the data, the researcher uses the theory from Miles and Huberman (2014); data reduction; data display, and conclusion drawing/data verification.

Table 1. Technique of Data Analysis



RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

The research findings were concerned with the students' perception toward their reading difficulties while they were having reading material or in doing any task of reading ability in the classroom. This research was done by distributing questionnaires for students which was consisted 15 (fifteen) statements technique for collecting data with likert-scale, the aim is to find out the reading difficulties are faced by the Eight grade students at SMPS. Awaluddin Pontianak.

B. Finding Questionnaires

In this phase, the researcher showed the result with distributing questionnaires for students which had aimed to get accurate information and students' perception related to students reading difficulties in comprehending English reading text. In addition, the research finding based on the output of the questionnaires. The following table presents the findings related to the difficulties faced by EFL learners in English reading text particularly at SMPS Awaluddin Pontianak. The researcher came to the conclusion with divided the difficulties faced by Eight grade students at SMPS Awaluddin Pontianak into four aspects with the highest and the lowest result below:

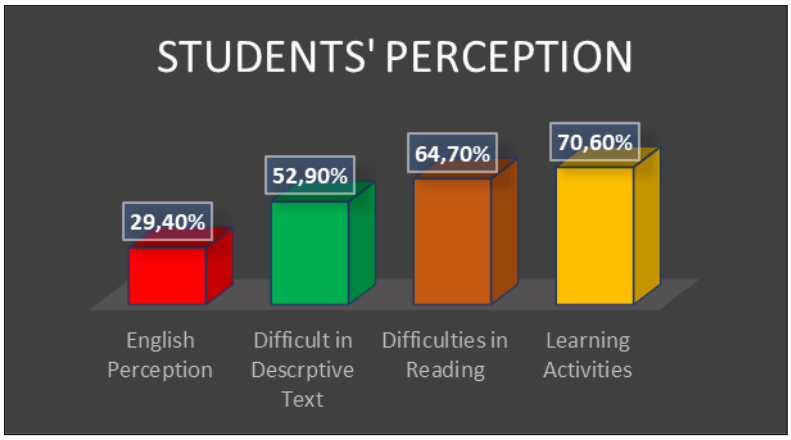


Chart 1. Students' Perception

From the chart above, the lowest result in English perception that students most students dislike or uninteresting in English subjects as second language with the frequency of 29.40%. Meanwhile, in the second result of

students' difficulties in descriptive text was 52.90% of them was challenging in topic material in which they did not know before. Then, the highest perception of the students' difficulties in reading were 64.70% of them was difficult in reading text when they were reading text with long sentences along with unfamiliar words. Then the last perception in learning activities with the highest scores were 70.60% of students mentioned that the school still experiences deficiencies in facilities and infrastructure such as teaching materials, relevant media, and so on.

C. Discussion

In this phase, the researcher discussed the research result of students' reading difficulties in understanding descriptive text that had been showed above. As mentioned earlier, that reading is one of the cognitive sequences for understanding the readings of a text thoroughly so that the reader can present and draw conclusions in the text. The reading activities can make reader get useful information or they can add knowledge. In this occasion, the researcher discussed the result of students' reading difficulties in understanding descriptive text by four aspects:

First was about the students' perception against English subjects. Based on the highest perception 58.8% of students dislike or uninteresting in English subjects as second language. In fact, if they have low interest or students who may lose interest and become unenthusiastic. Feeling inadequate or lacking confidence in their English language skills can make students reluctant to actively engage in learning. Whereas, the students should be mastered in four English skills, one of them is reading. As mentioned by Larasati (2019) that reading is one of the English skills that should be mastered by the students in learning English. It is one of receptive skills which is very crucial nowadays.

Second was students' difficulties understanding descriptive text. Students found difficulties in descriptive text with their perception. In other words, they may have difficulty reading descriptive text for a variety of reasons, one of them were numbers of students challenging in topic material in which they did not know before. According to the English curriculum (2013) for Junior High

School, a descriptive text is one that describes something, someone, or a location in detail. Additionally, descriptive research aimed to explore and clarify a phenomenon or social reality by describing them so that the readers are able to imagine or obtain information within text. Therefore, the teacher should pay more attention to the topic given to students in order to help students understand well about the material and to encourage students to improve their self-potential.

Third refers to the reading difficulties faced by Eight grade students at SMPS Awaluddin. These difficulties classified into several aspects, including:

a. The students found difficulty in understanding the text. It was occurred since the students had lack of vocabulary building or limited in English words. As claimed by Anisatul Fuadah (2018) it is known that reading with limited vocabulary is challenging which makes students do not understand completely what text is about. Inadequate language knowledge could be the cause of a lack of understanding. This suggests that reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge have a strong relationship. Therefore, students must have a sufficient vocabulary to comprehend text.
b. The students to have difficulty in understanding reading text is that students for get detailed information with the frequency 52.9%. Some students have difficulty getting information, because they do not understand what information the greeting text discussed. Therefore, they have difficulty getting the specific information in the text.
c. The students to have difficulty in reading comprehension is that students do not making inference with the frequency of 52.9%. Some students, not understand the context of text. They have difficulty determining the context in text because they cannot determine singular or plural words. They also have difficulty pronouns, places, and people. So, they have difficulty understanding the context in the text.
d. Factor that causes students' difficulties understanding in reading comprehension is identifying reference with the frequency of 58.8%. Some students' difficulties to identifying reference because not understand the

context of text. They have difficulty reading text, and they do not understand the context in the text. So, they have difficulty understanding the reading text.

e. From the factor difficulties faced by the students' in reading comprehension descriptive text were long sentences and unfamiliar words with the highest of frequency 64.7%. The students often faced the difficulties longer words will be more difficult to understand than shorter text, often students difficult in longer text impacted on difficulty in absorbing information.
f. Students difficult in finding key idea is challenging, often students difficult in Some texts are poorly written or too difficult so it is difficult to comprehend it, sometimes students difficult in the order of paragraph is not always obvious, often students difficult in finding main idea is difficult especially reading text written on their level, often students difficult in students confused what the main idea or where the main idea is located.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research aimed to determine the difficulties faced in reading comprehension by Eight grade students at SMPS Awaluddin Pontianak. The study employed a qualitative descriptive method, involving one of data collection through questionnaires which was distributed to students. The findings revealed with divided the difficulties faced by Eight grade students at SMPS Awaluddin Pontianak into four aspects with the highest and the lowest result.

The lowest result in English perception most students lack of interest or dislike in English subjects as second language with the frequency of 29.40%. Meanwhile, in the second result of students' difficulties in descriptive text was 52.90% of them was challenging in topic material in which they did not know before. Then, the highest perception of the students' difficulties in reading were 64.70% of them was difficult in reading text when they were reading text with long sentences along with unfamiliar words. Then the last perception in learning activities with the highest scores were 70.60% of students mentioned that the

school still experiences deficiencies in facilities and infrastructure such as teaching materials, relevant media, and so on.

The other findings also revealed that students struggled with various aspects of reading comprehension, including determining the main idea, identifying references, making inferences, detailing information, and interpreting vocabulary. Additionally, many students had limited vocabulary and a lack of interest in reading, contributing to these difficulties.

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