

## THE DIFFICULTIES IN READING COMPREHENSION OF THE FIRST GRADE STUDENTS OF SMAN 11 BANJARMASIN

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### Abstract

Reading comprehension is the readers' ability to understand, evaluate, and utilize text to find information according to the readers' purpose. When reading a text, students may find many factors contribute to the cause of students difficulties in comprehending text. . Some of these factors are language knowledge, learner's background knowledge, motivation, lack of reading strategies, and reading process. This research aimed to describe the students' difficulties in reading comprehension at the first grade of SMAN 11 Banjarmasin. The research method used in this study is a descriptive design used in this research with a qualitative approach. The researcher took the research subjects from one class that was X MIPA 3 and one English teacher. This research used a questionnaire consisting of 16 items divided into five types of questions which were linguistic aspects, reading strategies, psychological factors, and external factors. The researcher used the questionnaire to confirm the interview. The findings revealed that the students face the difficulties of vocabulary, grammar, and making inferences. These difficulties were caused by some factors: lack of knowledge about strategies in reading, lack of practice in reading English texts, lack of practices to find main ideas, explanatory ideas, and relationships between ideas, as well as lack of practices to make inferences and references from reading texts. The other factors were the students did not want to bring a dictionary to school, lack of support and motivation from parents, inadequate learning facilities, and difficulty in adapting in class. Therefore, it is suggested to other researchers to conduct further studies to investigate deeply about the factors which affect students in reading comprehension and how to overcome the difficulties.

Keywords: students difficulties, reading comprehension

### INTRODUCTION

The essence of the reading act is "*Reading Comprehension*". It becomes the primary challenge in teaching and learning reading skills. Reading comprehension is critical, not only to understanding text, but also for broader learning, academic performance, and employment (Oakhill, 2015). It is important to know about students' difficulties in learning so that teachers can help their students to overcome the difficulties. This also applies to students' difficulties in comprehending English texts. If they cannot comprehend English texts, they will face difficulties in doing school assignments and exams. When reading a text, students may find many factors that contribute as the cause of students' difficulties in comprehending text. Some of these factors are language knowledge, learner's background knowledge, motivation, lack of reading strategies, and reading process (Alderson, 2000). Therefore, the researcher is interested in investigating in detail about the difficulties that the students of SMAN 11 Banjarmasin have in comprehending English texts and the factors causing the difficulties.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Reading Comprehension**

“Reading Comprehension” is the essence of the reading act. It becomes the most difficult obstacle to overcome when teaching and mastering reading abilities. Not only for understanding literature, but also for broader learning, academic performance, and employment, reading comprehension is essential (Oakhill, 2015). Reading comprehension refers to a reader's ability to comprehend, evaluate, and use text to find information, readers should be able to locate the authors' ideas in the writing, whether they are presented openly or implicitly. Readers should understand the ways to read in order to fully comprehend and profit from reading (David, 2000).

### **Students Difficulties in Reading Comprehension**

Difficulty is a state or quality that is difficult to do or to understand (Hornby, 2001). The difficulty is the errors which are faced by the students in the teaching and learning process. It occurs because the students are confused or do not understand the material that has been explained by the teacher. In this research, difficulty is the condition that the students find it difficult to comprehend English reading text.

### **Reading Comprehension Aspects**

According to Nuttal (1982), there are five aspects of reading comprehension that the students should comprehend a text well, such as determining main idea, locating references, making inferences, detailed information/materials, and understanding vocabulary. These aspects are considered as difficulties faced by students in comprehending the text.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research method used in this study is a descriptive design used in this research with a qualitative approach. In short, this research employed a descriptive study in qualitative approach to describe the students' difficulties factor in reading comprehension at the first grade of SMAN 11 Banjarmasin. This research was carried out to find the students difficulties in reading comprehension and the factors that cause their difficulties. The researcher took the research subjects from one class that was X MIPA 3 and one English teacher. This research used a questionnaire consisting of 16 items divided into five types of questions which were linguistic aspects, reading strategies, psychological factors, and external factors. The researcher used the questionnaire to confirm the interview.

### **Respondents**

The subjects of the study were the students of 10<sup>th</sup> grade academic year 2020/2021 from class X Mipa 3 and one English teacher.

### **Instrument**

For this research, there were two instruments that were used for the research. They were questionnaires in which one used a close-ended question with multiple choice and interviews in which the researcher does the interview with the students to get more information about the difficulties they face in reading English texts. It means that the interview helps the interviewer

to know what the interview feels about something. The interview was an open-ended interview to offer a more flexible approach to the interview process.

## Procedure

Before the research instruments were used, the researcher consulted the drafts to the experts. It is because the drafts of the instruments might have a weakness on the question items for example they were ambiguous. In order to avoid that, this research depended on the experts' assessment to decide the validity, therefore, a lecturer of English Language Education and a teacher of the school were involved as the experts. The researcher also used a triangulation method to collect the data to ensure the validity, that is by using questionnaires and interviews to confirm the data findings. Researchers collected data through an online questionnaire in the form of a google form, and continued with online and offline interviews via Whatsapp and Zoom meetings. Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, the teaching-learning process is implemented online, for reasons of safety and health.

## Data Collection

The researcher used the questionnaire as the technique of data collecting with a four point likert scale to collect the data. data from the interview was obtained by analyzing why the subjects chose mostly “totally disagree” or “totally agree” over the given questionnaires and to get more data over the similar questions as in the questionnaire. The researcher chose interview subjects based on the number of questionnaire scores, in which the researcher will collect all the results of the questionnaire and see the total score on the questionnaire and take the lowest score, medium score, and highest score. The interview was developed by formulating two types of interview design. The first type was used for the teacher, and the second type was used for the students.

## Data Analysis

The researcher described the result of the data by analyzing the data qualitatively through manual counting to see the total score of each statement. The data itself was as natural as possible, without any manipulation. The data was then interpreted through descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics is a numerical or graphic way to summarize a certain data obtained from a sample to get a certain characteristic (Fraenkel et al., 2012). For the interview, the researcher made the transcript into an easier statement or paragraph for a deeper answer.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Findings

#### 1. Students Difficulties in Linguistic Aspects

The first difficulty is about linguistic aspects which consist of vocabulary, grammar. To be specific, the data from the questionnaire could be seen in the following tables.

Table 1 Students Difficulties in Linguistic Aspects

No.	Statement	Score			
		1	2	3	4
1.	When reading a text, I have trouble understanding the meaning of words.	4 (12,5%)	12 (37,5%)	13 (40,6%)	3 (9,4%)
2.	When reading a long text, I have difficulty understanding the meaning of the text.	2	11 (34,4%)	16 (50%)	3 (9,4%)

		(6,2%)			
3.	When reading a text, I have difficulty understanding the grammatical structure that is in the text.	0 (0%)	11 (34,4%)	18 (56,2%)	3 (9,4%)

Based on the table above show the result of questionnaire items related to the linguistic aspect. The data revealed there were scores of number 3 in the three items. The first item gets a total of 40.6% of all students, the second item gets a total of 50% of all students, and the third item gets a total of 56,2% of all students. Simply put, in the linguistic aspects, students often find it difficult to understand the vocabulary and grammar. Based on the results of the questionnaire, half of the students experienced difficulties in linguistic terms, so this certainly made it difficult to fully understand the text. So, in linguistics there are vocabulary, grammar, which are things that must be understood in reading to determine the text.

## 2. Students Difficulties in Applying reading strategies

The second is the difficulties in applying reading strategies contents, reading the entire text, understanding all the contexts in the text, finding main ideas and explanatory ideas, making assumptions to make conclusions. To be specific, the data from the questionnaire could be seen in the following tables.

Table 2 Students Difficulties in Applying Reading Strategies

No.	Statement	Score			
		1	2	3	4
1.	When reading a text, I have difficulty applying the strategy for reading text.	9 (28,1%)	12 (37,5%)	9 (28,1%)	2 (6,2%)
2.	When reading a text, I have difficulty reading the entire text.	10 (31,3%)	10 (31,3%)	11 (34,3%)	1 (3,1%)
3.	When reading a text, I have difficulty understanding all the contexts in the text.	4 (12,5%)	13 (40,6%)	11 (34,3%)	4 (12,5%)
4.	When reading a text, I have problem finding the main idea	7 (21,8%)	8 (25%)	14 (43,7%)	3 (9,4%)
5.	When reading a text, I have difficulty making assumptions to make conclusions.	7 (21,8%)	11 (34,3%)	13 (40,6%)	1 (3,1%)

Based on the table above show the result of questionnaire items related to the reading strategies. The data revealed there were 2 items with score number 2 and 3 items with score number 3. The first item get a total of 37,5% of all students, the second item get a total of 34,3% of all students, the third item get a total of 40,6% of all students, the fourth item get a total of 43,7% of all students, the fifth item get a total of 40,6% of all students. Simply put, in the factor applying reading strategies, the students do not have difficulties in applying the strategy, but they lack experience in reading, and they lack experience to know main ideas, explanatory ideas, relationship between ideas, and to make inference and reference. Based on the results of the questionnaire, nearly half of the students experienced difficulties in reading strategies, so this certainly made it difficult to truly understand the strategies in reading. So, in reading strategies they need to always read a text to have an experience, it is what helps them determine the main ideas, explanatory ideas, relationships between ideas, lack of experiences to make inference and reference.

## 3. Difficulties in Psychological Factors

The third difficulties are psychological factors such as low motivation to read, lack of interest in reading, concentration difficulties in reading, and lack of motivation from family/teacher. To be specific, the data from the questionnaire could be seen in the following tables.

Table 3 Students Difficulties in Psychological Factors

No.	Statement	Score			
		1	2	3	4
1.	I'm not motivated in reading	16 (50%)	8 (25%)	7 (21,8%)	1 (3,1%)
2.	When I read a text, I never read the text in its entirety.	12 (37,5%)	13 (40,6%)	5 (15,6%)	2 (6,2%)
3.	When reading the text, It's hard for me to concentrate when reading text	5 (15,6%)	14 (43,7%)	10 (31,3%)	3 (28,1%)
4.	My family provides support and motivation when I read English texts.	6 (18,7%)	5 (15,6%)	9 (28.12%)	12 (37,5%)

Table 3 shows the result of questionnaire items related to factors of the applying reading strategies. The data revealed there was an item with score number 1, 2 items with score number 2 and an item with score number 4. The first item gets a total of 50% of all students, the second item gets a total of 40,6% of all students, the third item gets a total of 43,7% of all students, and the fourth item gets a total of 37,5% of all students. Based on the results of the questionnaire, nearly half of the students did not experience difficulties in psychological factors, so this certainly made them feel motivated to read a text.

#### 4. External Factors

The fourth difficulties are external factors, inaccurate education delivery, the reading method is not fun, and lack of facility. To be specific, the data from the questionnaire could be seen in the following tables.

Table 4 Students Difficulties in External Factors

No.	Statement	Score			
		1	2	3	4
1.	I learned to read with tutors and parents	10 (31,3%)	7 (21,8%)	9 (28,1%)	6 (18,7%)
2.	Teacher conveys reading in a way that is fun and easy to understand	3 (9,4%)	8 (25%)	14 (43,7%)	7 (21,8%)
3.	When reading in the classroom, the learning is fun.	0 (0%)	10 (31,3%)	13 (40,6%)	9 (28,1%)
4.	English books in the school library are fully available	2 (6,2%)	8 (25%)	8 (25%)	14 (43,7%)

Based on the table above show the result of questionnaire items related to the factors of external. The data revealed there was an item with score number 1, 2 items with score number 3 and an item with score number 4. The first item gets a total of 31,1% of all students, the second item gets a total of 43,7% of all students, the third item gets a total of 40,6% of all students, and the fourth item gets a total of 43,7% of all students. Simply put, in the factor of external, students doesn't learned to read by their parents/tutors, they learned it in school or by themselves, the learning is fun so they can relax when learn to read, book easily found in the library Based on the results of the questionnaire, nearly half of the students experienced little difficulties in external factors, so this certainly makes them a little difficult to relax while reading a text. Some students teach themselves to read English readings, but this is also supported by fun learning from the teacher.

## Discussion

This part intended to discuss the answer of the research question based on the explained research findings. The first research question is about the most difficult aspects of reading comprehension that are encountered by students of SMAN 11 Banjarmasin and the answer was vocabulary, grammar, and making inferences. Meanwhile, the second research question is about the factors which cause the students difficulties in reading comprehension and the answers are lacking of knowledge about strategies in reading, lacking of experiences in reading English texts,

lacking of experiences to find main ideas, explanatory ideas, and relationships between ideas, and lacking of experiences to make inferences.

The difficulties are the linguistic aspects. Students find it difficult to comprehend reading passages because most of them do not know the meaning of some words in the reading texts and have difficulties in the grammar. Students and teacher agree that learning the meaning of words, grammar is difficult because some students forget to bring a dictionary, or mastery of grammar and pronouns is difficult because students often forget dictionaries, so teachers need to help students interpret every word they encounter, to help them in learning. This result was compatible with the theory from Sharpe (2005) who stated that while reading a passage, students expand their vocabulary by looking up new words in a dictionary and guessing the meaning from context. Context helps students make a general prediction about the meaning. Therefore, it might be difficult to comprehend a text if students have limited vocabulary and they forget to bring the dictionary.

The second difficulty is about factors of applying reading strategies. Reading strategies are needed in reading comprehension, from the results of questionnaires and interviews from Teacher and students. The findings show that the students have difficulties in applying reading strategies. They also don't know about reading strategies. This makes it difficult to determine main ideas, explanatory ideas, and the relationship between ideas. They also have difficulties in making inferences and references even though they have been assisted gradually by the teacher. If the teacher does not help directing them, they will have a very difficult time determining the correct answer. This result was compatible with the theory that reading comprehension requires many skills such as vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, knowledge of grammar, metacognitive awareness, syntactic knowledge, and reading strategies (Grabe, 2009; Koda, 2007).

The third is about the psychological factor. The problem is that when students do not get enough motivation from their families and teachers, they will have less interest in reading so that their reading motivation is low. This also affects their concentration level in learning. However, this is not a problem because almost half of the students in the class get enough motivation to have a willingness to read, but some feel they do not have the motivation and will to read. It was also compatible with the statement from Tompkins (2014) that motivated students are more engaged in reading, more confident, and more likely to comprehend effectively.

The last one is about the fourth factor, which is external. Although some students have motivation to learn, some of them do not learn about reading from the tutor or parents. They learn on their own or with their peers. Even in the classroom, the learning is fun so that the students are happy in learning. Moreover, the learning books in the library are also complete enough for students to read so that they can get additional knowledge. According to Grabe (2009) that reading comprehension involves the capacity to identify words quickly and efficiently, build and use a very large recognition vocabulary, process and evaluate sentences to construct comprehension, engage a variety of strategic processes and underlying cognitive skills that require support from others to achieve the capacity.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **Conclusion**

According to this study, the students faced these difficulties, as sequenced from the most to the least difficult, such as; vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, lacking of knowledge about strategies in reading, lacking of experiences in reading, lacking of experiences to know main ideas and explanatory ideas, relationships between ideas, and lacking of experiences to make inference and reference. The factors of students difficulties that the student faces in reading comprehension is not knowing the meaning of some words and students forget to bring a

dictionary, lack of support and motivation from parents so that students are less motivated in learning, inadequate learning facilities, and difficulty adapting in class.

### **Suggestion**

Based on the research result, the researcher gives some suggestions to students, English teacher, other researcher: It is suggested to the students to read a lot of books so they can gain more knowledge in the future, and do more practice with reading. It is suggested to the teacher to maintain the guided learning in reading comprehension to make sure the students more understand the context. It is suggested to the other researcher in a similar field to investigate more about the factor of student difficulties in other grade in other high schools.

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