
The Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Reading Comprehension Test

INFO PENULIS

Zuhra
Stkip An-Nur Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam
zuhraazhar@gmail.com

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini berjudul "Analisis Kesulitan-Kesulitan Para Siswa dalam Tes Pemahaman Bacaan" bertujuan untuk (1) menemukan tipe-tipe soal pemahaman bacaan yang paling sulit dihadapi oleh para siswa dan (2) mengapa mereka menghadapi kesulitan-kesulitan dalam soal tersebut. Sampel dari penelitian ini yang terpilih adalah mahasiswa program studi bahasa Inggris di STKIP An-Nur . Instrumennya adalah tes dan panduan wawancara. Berdasarkan dari analisa tes, peneliti menemukan bahwa tipe-tipe pertanyaan pemahaman bacaan yang paling sulit dihadapi oleh para siswa adalah soal inference dan tipe pertanyaan ini diklasifikasikan ke dalam soal yang sulit berdasarkan pada rumus indeks kesulitan.. Dari panduan wawancara, peneliti menemukan bahwa para siswa tidak menguasai banyak kosa kata dan tidak memiliki pengetahuan tentang tipe-tipe soal pemahaman bacaan sehingga para siswa tidak memahami pertanyaan-pertanyaan yang ditanyakan kepada mereka dan ini juga disebabkan oleh kelemahan mereka dalam membedakan tipe-tipe pertanyaan pemahaman bacaan..

Kata Kunci: Tes, Tipe-tipe Soal, Pemahaman Bacaan

Abstract

This study entitled "The Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Reading Comprehension Test" was intended to (1) find out the most difficult reading comprehension question type faced by the students in reading test and (2) why the students faced the difficulties in that question. The sample of this study was the English Department students at STKIP An-Nur. The instruments of this study were test and interview guides. Based on the analysis of the test, the writer found that the most difficult reading comprehension question type faced by the students was inference question and this question also was classified into the difficult question based on index difficulty formula. From the interview guide, the writer found that the students are poor in vocabulary mastery and had no knowledge about reading comprehension question types. Thus, this study found that the most difficult reading comprehension question type faced by the students was inference question. Due to the students did not comprehend the questions asked to them and it was caused by their weaknesses in differentiating the types of reading comprehension question.

Key Words: test, question types , reading comprehension

A. Introduction

Undoubtedly, teaching a foreign language is hard. It is caused by many problems. Reading becomes difficult for the readers because of inadequate vocabulary and background knowledge with which to connect and link new ideas to previous learning are often failed in reading comprehension (Klinger, Vaughn, & Boardman, 2007: 4) and when they when the readers are not familiar with the particular language structure and features of the text and their language-processing ability will break down (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, and Hurwitz; 1999)

The importance of teaching reading is to build the students' ability and knowledge. In teaching reading, there are a set of learning goals that must be achieved by the students; the ability to read a wide range of texts in English, the ability to adapt the reading style according to the reading purpose (i.e. skimming, scanning), the ability to build a knowledge of language, the ability to build schematic knowledge, the ability to develop an awareness of the structure of written texts in English, and the ability to take or assume a critical perspective or thinking to the contents of the texts (Hedge, as cited in Alyousef, 2005).

Therefore, reading and other English language skills are interconnected to other English skills. Brown (2001) stated that, "reading will best be developed in association with writing, listening, and speaking activity" (p. 283). In other words, reading has positive effects on the students' writing, listening, and speaking and should be taught in association with other language skills. While reading the students pick up some words and they will use them in writing or in speaking. For example, through reading you can build your vocabulary up or you can improve your writing skill.

To read means to understand what the writer tries to present in his/ her writing. It means that a reader's background knowledge and competence are needed when the readers read a reading material. Reading can be easy or difficult for students depending on factors inherent in the text, on the relationship between the text and the knowledge, and the text and competence of the readers. When reading, the readers' knowledge and competence interact with the content of the text in comprehending the text.

According to Rubin, as quoted by Barcher (1998), "reading as a complex, dynamic process that involves the bringing of meaning to, and getting of meaning from, the printed page" (p. 14). In other words, reading is a process where some elements are interconnected or related to each other. For example, the reader's background knowledge and the text which is read are useful to comprehend the text. Then, to understand the meaning of the reading material, the reader needs to understand the meaning of the words first. Therefore, the knowledge of vocabulary is needed when the readers deal with reading.

Based on the data of PISA (program for International Students Assessment), a program of OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), was designed the test to evaluate the students' achievement in reading, math, and science and Indonesia was one of the country participating in the program. In 2018 the data showed that the Indonesia students achieved the lowest grade of achievement, that was 371 point. OEDC stated that the Indonesian students were only able to answer correctly the lower level of reading questions such as stated detail questions of short reading text. Otherwise, they were not able to answer the questions of inference or making conclusion of the text from the longer reading text, the faced the difficulties in this cases (Hadi Wuryanto, S.Kom., M.A. dan Moch. Abduh, Ph.D., 2022).

This research will give two contributions for the educational system in order to be more progressive both theoretical and practical contributions. The theoretical significances of this study are to be a resource or a reference for other studies in developing reading questions in the future and to be a reference for policy makers concerning the students' difficulties in reading skill.

In addition, these are some practical contributions of this research. First the result of this research can inform the lecturer concerning the students' difficulties in reading comprehension test. Thus, the lecturer knows what should be done to overcome the difficulties. Then the result of this research can be transferred to other pedagogical setting elsewhere other than STKIP AN-NUR, in regard to students' difficulties in reading. As well as this study is expected to be a resource or a reference to overcome students' reading difficulties and to be a resource or a reference for other studies in developing reading skills in the future.

All teachers would probably agree that the primary reason for reading text is to understand it. This statement has been proved by Smith. Smith (1967) stated that, "reading without comprehension is not reading and it is the ability to recognize, to pronounce, and to understand the printed symbols on page" (p. 185). In other words, reading is the process of

reconstructing author's ideas and deriving meaning from a printed page through the ability to recognize printed words, knowledge of language, and previous reading and life experience. This statement is related to what was said by Team of Five (2006), "reading is a way of getting the meaning or knowledge from the printed page such as text books, newspapers, magazines, and novels" (p. 51). It can be said that reading is the ability to the readers to draw the essential meaning of each word which is read. While we are calling out words from a book or a text, unconsciously we are communicating with the writer.

According to Rubin as quoted by Barcher (1998), "reading as a complex, dynamic process that involves the bringing of meaning to, and getting of meaning from, the printed page" (p. 14). It means that reading as a complex and dynamic processes in which some elements are interconnected in reading to bring the meaning to the printed page and to get the meaning from it. In turn, the reader needs to know how to read effectively because reading is a complex and dynamic processes.

Then, the readers need to be familiar with reading. Each reader has unique characteristic and successful readers also share much in common. Regarding to that idea, there are some reading skills that the successful readers choose to comprehend the text well. According to Anderson et al. as cited in Aebersold and Field 1997, p.16):

Recognize words quickly, use text features (subheading, transitions), use world knowledge, analyze unfamiliar word, identify the grammatical function of words, read for meaning, concentrate on constructing meaning guess about the meaning of the text...

The statement above showed that the importance of understanding reading skills in order to understand the meaning of the text. Reading skills are also interrelated. For example, the reader needs to recognize the words of the text in order to get the meaning of it or the reader may use context to build meaning and aid comprehension in order to get essence or message from the text.

In this study, the writer used some reading questions to analyze what reading comprehension question is the most difficult to the students in STKIP AN-NUR and used interview guide to gather the data about why the question is difficult to them.

B. Methodology

The research method used in this study was quantitative approach. The quantitative approach was used to obtain the data about the most difficult reading comprehension types faced by the students. Gay et al. (2006:9) stated that, "Quantitative research is the collection and analysis of numerical data in order to explain, predict, and/ or control phenomena of interest". Specifically in quantitative research, the writer must stated the hypotheses that predict the results of the research before the study begins (Gay et al., 2006:18). Quantitative research involves studies that make use of statistical analyses to obtain their findings, require a degree of control and manipulation of phenomena control and the key features include formal and systematic measurement (DeMatteo, Marczyk, Festinger, 2005 & (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison., 2007).

In selecting the sample of this study, non probability sampling was used. Non probability sampling is the process of selecting sample using a technique which does not permit the researcher to specify the probability, or chance, that each number of a defined population will be selected for the sample (Sugiyono, 2008; Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2006). In other words, the researcher does not give a same chance to defined population to be selected for the sample of this study.

The technique of selecting sampling that was used in this study was purposive sampling. The purposive sampling is a technique to select sample as sources of data with certain consideration, such as selecting the samples based on the information they have obtained and that information is needed to be as data of the study (Sugiyono, 2008). The consideration of the sample in this study was the students' who had passed the first level of Reading Subject. There were 15 (fifteen) students.

The data were collected by using test and interview as research instruments. The use of the test was to find out the most difficult reading comprehension question type faced by the students in reading. The test was about reading comprehension test which was adopted from TOEFL test. In this case the writer used the TOEFL reading test because it is a standard test to analyze the university students' English reading proficiency. The test consisted of 25 (twenty-

five) questions which distributed into main idea, stated and unstated detail, inference and vocabulary questions. Each type of questions was 5 (five) questions. After gathering the data of the test and analyze the result, then the data were collected by interview as well in order to do an analysis why the students have the difficulties in.

To analyze the data, index difficulty of question item formula was needed. This following formula was used to find the most difficult reading comprehension question types for students as suggested by Arikunto (2012: 223).

$$P = \frac{B}{JS}$$

where:

P : Proportions or index difficulty

B : Number of students who answer the item correctly

JS : Total number of students

After finding the proportion of each question items, the classification of index difficulty was needed in order to know the most difficult reading comprehension question types. It was mentioned based on Arikunto, 2012: p. 225). The interpretation of index difficulty was in the following table:

Table B The Classification of Index Difficulty (source: Arikunto, 2012: p. 225)

Interval	Classification
0.00 - 0.30	Difficult
0.30 - 0.70	Fair
0.70 - 1.00	Easy

C. Result and Discussion

As the result of this study, the writer found that the most difficult reading comprehension question type faced by the students is inference type. Moreover, based on the index of difficulty analysis, the writer found that all inference questions are difficult for the students. The inference type was classified into the most difficult type faced by the students because there were only two students who could answer each question of this type correctly. The result revealed that inference questions was on 0.13 interval and it referred to difficult classification.

Then after analyzing the data from interview, the data revealed that the reason why the students had difficulties in answering the questions correctly, in this case inference questions, and became the most difficult to them because they did not understand what strategy was appropriate to be applied to answer the questions because they did not know any classification of questions in reading comprehension. Then, the students also stated that they do not have adequate vocabulary mastery so it forced the students' failure in comprehending the text.

Therefore, the result of this research also correlated with what was stated in previous part that is reading becomes difficult because of inadequate vocabulary and background knowledge with which to connect and link new ideas to previous learning are often failed in reading comprehension (Klinger, Vaughn, & Boardman, 2007: 4) and when the readers are not familiar with the particular language structure and features of the text and their language-processing ability will break down (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, and Hurwitz; 1999).

D. Conclusion

This study discovered that the most difficult reading comprehension question type faced by the students was the inference type. Moreover, based on the index of difficulty analysis, the researcher found that all the inference type questions were difficult for the students. Therefore, this reading comprehension question type was classified as the most difficult type of reading comprehension question faced by the students at STKIP An-Nur.

E. Suggestion

This study revealed that most of the students failed to answer reading comprehension questions correctly. In particular, the inference questions were the most difficult type of reading comprehension question faced by the students. It is suggested that teachers need to apply various teaching techniques in teaching reading in order to achieve better reading comprehension. Here, the teachers also need to be selective in using teaching techniques that

are the most appropriate. The teachers need to teach their students about the different types of reading comprehension question to make these questions more comprehensible and more understood by the students. Thus, the students will know how to differentiate the different types of questions and they will know how to answer the different types of reading comprehension question asked. As a result, they will not face so many difficulties in answering the different types of reading comprehension question.

For further researchers, it is suggested to conduct a longitudinal study to investigate how the students use their cognitive and metacognitive strategies while reading a text and finishing a test, the students' learning preferences, as well as how the students face their problems in reading. Additionally, it may also be possible to investigate the processes of teaching and learning including the implementation of different teaching techniques by the teachers especially in teaching reading skills and also the interaction between the teachers and the students.

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