

An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Reading Comprehension of Descriptive Text

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ABSTRACT

Many difficulties are experienced by students when understanding English text reading by Vocational High School (SMK) students. There are many factors that influence reading text. This study aims to help students in understanding English text so that the difficulties experienced by students in understanding descriptive text and the factors of difficulty that influence it can be known. This study was conducted on class I Culinary Arts students at State Vocational High School (SMKN) 9 Padang. The type of research conducted was descriptive qualitative research with data collection techniques used were questionnaires, interviews, observations and document analysis. The number of student subjects studied was 35 students. The results of this study were 69.5% of students experienced difficulties with very strong answers to the difficulties they found. As many as 23.1% of students experienced difficulties with the normal category. As many as 6.3% of students who did not experience difficulties were very difficult and as many as 1.1% of students did not experience difficulties at all. These results indicate that students with a strong category still find many difficulties in reading comprehension in the descriptive texts they have read. Meanwhile, the factors that influence the difficulty in understanding descriptive text reading are lack of vocabulary mastery, lack of motivation to learn English, learning without a tutor or learning online, and less supportive environmental or social factors. So, this study can help schools in taking action to further improve students' abilities that can help students in vocational schools.

ABSTRAK

Banyak kesulitan yang alami oleh siswa ketika memahami dalam membaca teks bahasa Inggris oleh siswa Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK). Banyak sekali faktor yang mempengaruhi dalam membaca teks. Penelitian ini bertujuan membantu membantu siswa dalam pemahaman teks bahasa Inggris sehingga dapat diketahui kesulitan-kesulitan yang dialami siswa dalam pemahaman teks deskriptif dan faktor-faktor kesulitan yang mempengaruhi. Penelitian ini dilakukan terhadap siswa kelas I Tata Boga pada Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan Negeri (SMKN) 9 Padang. Jenis penelitian yang dilakukan adalah penelitian kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah angket, wawancara, observasi dan analisis dokumen. Jumlah subjek siswa yang diteliti berjumlah 35 siswa. Hasil penelitian ini adalah sebanyak 69,5% siswa mengalami kesulitan dengan jawaban sangat kuat terhadap kesulitan yang ditemukannya. Sebanyak 23,1% siswa mengalami kesulitan dengan kategori biasa. Sebanyak 6,3% siswa yang tidak mengalami kesulitan sangat sulit dan sebanyak 1,1% siswa tidak mengalami kesulitan sama sekali. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa siswa dengan kategori kuat masih banyak menemukan kesulitan dalam pemahaman bacaan pada teks deskriptif yang telah dibacanya. Sedangkan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kesulitan dalam memahami bacaan teks deskriptif adalah kurangnya penguasaan kosakata, kurangnya motivasi belajar bahasa Inggris, belajar tanpa tutor atau belajar daring, dan faktor lingkungan atau sosial yang kurang mendukung. Sehingga penelitian ini dapat membantu sekolah dalam mengambil tindakan agar lebih meningkatkan kemampuan siswa yang dapat membantu siswa-siswa di SMK.

1. Introduction

Reading is an activity that can add insight and unlock all the secrets of science [1]. This activity can increase the reader's knowledge to get new information or increase the intake of knowledge [2]. This is also interpreted as the ability to read the text, process and understand the meaning well so that it can draw the right conclusions [3]. Reading is the process of receiving control of

information in language through print media [4]. Meanwhile, according to different researcher, reading is the practice of using text to create meaning from what is contained in the text [5].

Furthermore, increasing students' knowledge they need to apply the reading habit [6]. For that, as a teacher, it is necessary to train students to get used to reading. This activity can boost success in learning English [7]. Teaching reading, not only need things that are so

complex, students only need focus and have many vocabularies to understand the reading well. Meanwhile, as a teacher, it is necessary to guide them to focus more on the reading material they read [8]. To make it easier for students to understand their reading, teachers should need to provide a style's active learning for these reading skills, so that they don't feel bored when doing reading activities [9].

Meanwhile, to find out students' difficulties in reading comprehension, the researchers used descriptive texts as a measure of their understanding, because it is the type of text that must be mastered by first grade students of SMK. In reading for this grade, students are expected to achieve competency standards, namely understanding the purpose of social functions, text structure, linguistic elements, and contextual meaning of simple descriptive texts. For tenth graders, based on the 2013 National Education Standards Agency (BSNP), there are two basic competencies required in reading descriptive texts as follows:

- a. Understand the purpose, structure of the text, and linguistic elements of a simple written descriptive text.
- b. Understanding the meaning in simple written descriptive text.

Although in fact, students' difficulties in reading comprehension do not occur in junior high school, in high school they also found many difficulties [10]. However, reading comprehension for students who do not have the provision of words, will indeed find it difficult to understand the conclusions contained in the reading text [11]. So, to teach them, it takes a sufficient style in learning to read. Not only that, the lack of background that students have about knowledge is also able to slow down their understanding.

2. Research Method

This study, researcher used descriptive qualitative to finish this research. Qualitative research is research that aims to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perception, motivation, action, and others by way of description in the form of words, language, in a natural context and by utilizing various natural methods [12]. Activities in qualitative data analysis were carried out interactively and continuously until they were completed, so that the data was clear [13].

2.1. Research Participant

Researcher chose students Tata Boga SMKN 9 Padang as respondents in this study. While, the population was the first grade Tata Boga SMKN 9 Padang. Students were divided into seven classes. From the sample and items from the larger population that we collected and analyzed to make conclusions. However, it turns out that the population is too large to be used as a research

sample. So, the researcher used purposive sampling because the English teacher at SMK N 9 suggested that the researcher choose one class. In addition, in determining and selecting classes, the researcher must consider choosing a class that has good abilities, both in terms of attitude, understanding in learning and also their cohesiveness in the learning classroom, because this will help researchers to realize a good research process and smoothly as planned.

The sample of this study chooses First Grade of Tata Boga 1 SMK N 9 Padang which took a sample of 15 students after being determined, according to the criteria that have been explained by the researcher.

2.2. Identification of the problem

Based on the problems that have been described in the background, several factors cause them to be unable to understand the reading. First, the lack of background those students have when reading, especially in English. So, they do not get an idea of what they have been read. Second, the students do not master enough vocabulary when they are reading the text. So, this is will make it difficult for them to understand the reading because they are not able to get a good reading idea.

2.3. Source of Data

This research has been carried out in SMKN 9 Padang in the 2021/2022 academic year. The object of this research were students in reading comprehension of the descriptive text provided by the researcher

2.4. Technique of Data Collection

In qualitative research, data collection is mostly done by participant observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. The basic methods relied on by qualitative researcher to collect information are participation in setting, observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation review [14]. In this study, researchers used interviews supported by questionnaires and documentation.

2.4.1. Observation

The researcher observed the teaching and learning process of reading comprehension. The teaching aspect of the learning process is described in Table 1.

Table 1. Observation Guideline

Students' Problems	
Students' problems in learning reading comprehension:	1. Students have difficulty in determining the main idea.
	2. Students have difficulty in finding specific information.
	3. Students have difficulty in making inference.
	4. Students have difficulty in identifying reference.
	5. Students have difficulty understanding the meaning of words or sentences.

2.4.2. Interview

As the definition of the interview is an activity carried out to obtain information directly by expressing questions to the respondents [15]. An interview means dealing directly between the interviewer and the respondent, and the activities are carried out orally. Likewise, interviews are data collection techniques through questions asked orally to respondents [16].

In this research:

- a. The researcher is an interviewer, who will ask some questions that have been provided, to students about the factors that influence them in reading comprehension.
- b. Researcher focus on the factors that cause them to find the difficulties they face when reading descriptive texts.
- c. After getting the answer, the researcher will take the highest to the lowest average of the factors that make it difficult for students in reading comprehend the text that has been given.

2.4.3. Questionnaire

Researcher used a questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to support the data obtained from interviews with students. Researcher used closed questions. A closed question respondent is given ready-made answers to choose from, this item does not require the respondent to produce free writing; instead, they must choose one of the alternatives, regardless of whether their preferred answer is among them. Then, the researcher distributed the questionnaires after the reading comprehension teaching process. The guidelines for the questionnaire used by researchers can be explained in Table 2.

Table 2. Questionnaire Guideline

Aspect	Indicators
Student's Problems	1. Ask students whether they have a problem for finding specific information.
	2. Ask students whether they have a problem in determining the main idea.
	3. Ask students whether they have a problem in making inference.
	4. Ask students whether they have a problem in identifying reference.
	5. Ask students whether they have a problem due to lack of background.

The formula to finding the percentage of questionnaire results, in Equation (1) [14].

$$p = \frac{f}{n} 100\% \tag{1}$$

Where p is Percentage, f is Frequency of each questionnaire answer, and n is Number of respondents.

2.5. The Technique of Data Analysis

2.5.1. Data Reducing

It is a process of selecting, focusing on simplification, abstraction and transformation of data, in the form of written notes found in the field. Data reduction is a type of analysis carried out to sharpen, categorize, direct, eliminate data and organize data to obtain conclusions and verification. This means that researcher choose important data that has been collected. Then the researcher categorizes the data related to the difficulties faced by students and the factors that cause students' difficulties in understanding English reading texts for first grade Tata Boga 1 at SMK N 9 Padang in the 2021/2022 academic year. The data were obtained from interviews and texts. In this case, the researcher abstracts the data.

2.5.2. Data Reducing

Data display is the second level in the Miles and Huberman model of qualitative data analysis. Views can be text or expanded diagrams, graphs, charts, tables or matrices that provide new ways to organize thinking about more textual embedded data. At the display stage, additional, higher order categories or themes may emerge from the data that go beyond those first discovered during the initial data reduction process.

2.5.3. Conclusion

After the researcher wrote, edited, classified, and reduced, then the researcher presented and described it by drawing conclusions from the data and information that had been obtained.

3. Result and Discussion

This study, the researcher used two instruments to obtain data from students. The two instruments are, questionnaire and observation. This questionnaire gave to 35 students First Grade of Tata Boga 1 in SMK N 9 Padang. While the observation is done by observing how students learn in class. The following researcher provided an explanation of the two data processing instruments.

3.1. Questionnaire

The first point, a questionnaire gave to 35 students in the class. This questionnaire developed from Nuttall's theory, regarding the difficulties found by students in reading comprehension in descriptive texts. Namely, such determining the main idea, finding specific information, making inference, identifying reference, and the understanding meaning of words. Then, before they answered, the researcher first gave an explanation of how to fill out the questionnaire. Below are the results of their answers in Table 3.

Table 3. The Questionnaire List

No	Indicators	Respondents			
1	I find it difficult to determine the idea of reading the English text	20	12	3	0
2	I find it difficult to understand English reading ideas.	24	8	2	1
3	I find it difficult to get specific information from an English text.	20	12	2	1
4	I find it difficult to understand specific information from English texts.	25	9	1	0
5	I find it difficult to making inference in English text.	30	5	0	0
6	I find it difficult to get idea to make inference in English text.	28	6	1	0
7	I find it difficult to identifying reference in English text.	18	11	5	1
8	I find it difficult to understand reference in English text.	19	8	7	1
9	I have difficulty understanding the meaning of an English text.	27	7	1	0
10	I have difficulty understanding sentences in English texts.	32	3	0	0
Total of each difficulty		243	81	22	4
Total of all difficulties		350			

Based on the questionnaire table above, the researcher explained that out of 35 students there were 69.5% with the highest score they strongly agreed with the difficulties they found in reading comprehension. This means, more than most of the First Grade of Catering 1 SMK N 9 Padang students, there are still many difficulties in English. Then, 23.1% of them gave an agree answer. This means that, in addition to finding it very difficult, some of them also found difficulties in the moderate category. Furthermore, there were 6.3% of them gave disagreed answers. The point is, among them there are some students who do not agree if they find difficulties, meaning that they already have the ability to learn English, especially in reading comprehension. And the last result was 1.1% of their answers, that they did not find any difficulties in learning English, especially in reading comprehension. This group of students means that they already have very good skills in English.

Based on the description above, the researcher concludes that, from the questionnaire conducted by First Grade of Tata Boga 1 SMK N 9 Padang students, they are still very minimal in mastering English, especially in reading comprehension in descriptive texts. The researcher concluded that according to the results of data processing from the questionnaire.

3.2. Observation

In the second instrument, the researcher used observation. In the observation, the researcher used the observation list to observe the students in the learning class. The observation list is used as a guide for researchers in observing them, how they learn in class, how they face difficulties in class, and how they interact with fellow students to liven up their English learning class.

The researcher uses a list of observations by referring to Nuttal's theory. The following points are listed in the observation list used by researchers to observe in Table 4.

Table 4. The Questionnaire List

No	Observation's List	Yes	No	Nb.
1	Students have difficulty in determining the main idea.	√		
2	Students have difficulty in finding specific information.	√		
3	Students have difficulty in making inference.	√		
4	Students have difficulty in identifying reference	√		
5	Students have difficulty understanding the meaning of words or sentences.	√		

Based on the results of observations in the learning class, the researcher concluded several points from the results of this study. The first is, when the researcher observes students in the class learning English, students pay attention to the teacher when explaining the lesson well. Then, they formed groups to do the tasks that have been given by the teacher. Next, they discuss the task.

Based on the average student recognition, they are not able to understand the reading of the text contained in the textbook. The use of English is one of the reasons why they are difficult to understand. This happens because English is a foreign language and they do not have sufficient vocabulary mastery to help them in understanding the reading. Their misunderstanding triggers the absence of finding the ideas in the reading text. They admit that the text is difficult to understand.

Second, because they cannot understand the text, this makes it difficult for them to make inferences from the text. So, they are not able to draw conclusions from the reading text. The last thing is, they are not able to identify the existing reference sentences in the text, which should be able to become new information for them. However, because of their lack of understanding of the text, they were only able to master some simple sentences but did not support the perfection of understanding the reading text.

From the results of this observation, the researcher also concluded that, in observing most of the students in the class, they still found it difficult to understand the reading of the English text given by the teacher as a group assignment. In their completion, they asked a lot of friends and teachers about the meaning of the difficult words they found. This shows that the results of this observation support the questionnaire that has been given by the researcher to the students

3.3. Interview

In the second research question, the researcher used interviews to get the right answer. The researcher chose to use the interview because he felt that the interview was an accurate instrument because the researcher got

the answers directly from the students' mouths face-to-face. This is the satisfaction of the researcher getting a good answer can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. The Questionnaire List

No.	Indicators	Questions
1.	Difficulties to understand long reading text. Difficult to	Do you find difficulties to understand long reading text? Do you find difficult to know
2.	Know the meaning of the vocabulary. School and learning environment, give affects reading interest in English.	the meaning of the vocabulary? Whether in school and learning environment, affects your reading interest in English?

In using the interview instrument, the researcher did it for 15 students who were chosen randomly. The list of questions gave by the researcher was 3, which was developed from another researcher theory, regarding the difficulty factors found by students in reading comprehension in English descriptive texts [17]. This interview conducted on 15 students of First Grade Tata Boga 1 SMK N 9 Padang. However, because their answers were the same and in line, the researcher only wrote 1 interview by recapitulating their answers into one.

Based on the description of the interview conducted by the researcher by developing the theory, it can be concluded that, in the first indicator, students found difficulties in understanding long texts in English. The influencing factors are the lack of vocabulary they have, in connection with English which is a foreign language. So that their interest in learning is minimal, especially when they study online during the pandemic. This triggers them to be lazy to learn English.

Then the second indicator, students found difficulties in knowing the meaning of vocabulary. Based on their answers, which the researcher concluded, the factors that influenced them to face this difficulty were because English was a foreign language and also their lack of interest in studying on their own at home. Finally, the environment is able to attract their interest to learn and explore English better.

In the researcher's analysis, the main point of the difficulty factors they face is because English is a foreign language, which many students don't like so that it supports the emergence of other difficulty factors. For them, English is a difficult language to understand, many vocabularies that they do not have which makes it difficult to understand sentences or even English texts. Then, the home-learning factor triggers them to be less interested in learning English, there is no tutor or teacher who teaches better to help attract their interest in learning English.

However, if there is a teacher or tutor who teaches them or even a supportive learning environment, they will be interested in learning English well. When asked, they

want to study English for work purposes, or just playing games and watching western movies.

3.4. Discussion

Based on the development of the theory from Nuttal in research regarding the difficulties students found in reading comprehension of descriptive texts and the theory regarding the factors that influence their difficulties, the researcher divided 2 parts for questions [17], [18].

3.4.1. What are the difficulties faced by students in taking understanding reading comprehension?

In the first question, researcher obtained data from the questionnaires distributed and observations made to observe students in learning English. By developing the theory from Nuttal, it turns out that students find difficulties in many aspects, as stated in the results of the research above [18].

The difficulties that students find have an influence on understanding when they learn English. In the first indicator, students found difficulties in determining reading ideas. The difficulties they face are influenced by various factors, in general, students' internal and external factors [17]. Then the second indicator, students found difficulties in making inferences from the readings they have read, this is due to their lack of understanding of the English reading. Furthermore, difficulties found when identifying the location of the reference sentence from the reading. Lack of understanding of the language, caused them to find a lot of difficulties. Being a foreign language and the lack of vocabulary triggers them to found difficulties in various aspects when reading.

3.4.2. What are the difficulties factors faced by students in understanding reading comprehension of descriptive text?

In the second question, the indicators developed by researcher regarding the factors that influence students' difficulties in reading comprehension of descriptive texts [17]. The first indicator is the difficulty factor faced by students in understanding long English texts. based on the results of his research, this is because English is a foreign language and also the lack of vocabulary mastery. Second, their difficulty in knowing vocabulary is caused by their lack of capital in mastering vocabulary and also decreasing learning factors. Finally, the learning environment that affects their interest in learning. This factor becomes a big factor when having a learning environment that does not support the deepening of English.

The purpose of this study analyzed the difficulties found by students in reading comprehension and to find out the factors that influence the causes of students' difficulties in reading comprehension on descriptive texts. Respondents in this study were students of First Grade

Tata Boga 1 SMKN 9 Padang. This class consisted of 35 students, and the results of this study were taken from questionnaire, interview and observation conducted in the English learning class.

Based on the data described in the previous chapter, the researcher concluded that in First Grade Tata Boga 1 SMK N 9 Padang students had difficulties in understanding the readings in descriptive texts. From 35 students, there were 243 scores from their answers with a score of 69.5%. This is the highest score from the "strongly agree" category on the difficulty points they found. This category is the highest position, which means that most of the First Grade Tata Boga 1 SMK N 9 Padang students still have difficulty understanding English. Then, 81 scores of their answers with a value of 23.1% were in the category of agreeing on the difficulty points found. Furthermore, 22 scores with a value of 6.3% are in the "disagree" position, which means that there are some students who only have little difficulty in understanding descriptive text reading. Finally, 4 scores with the lowest value of 6.3% which means that there are only a few students who do not find any difficulty at all in reading comprehension of English descriptive texts. Furthermore, in this study the researcher also conducted interview with the students of this class to find out the factors influencing their difficulties in reading comprehension of descriptive texts.

4. Conclusion

The study concluded that the lack of students' understanding of English is minimal vocabulary mastery, so they find it difficult to find meaning, get ideas and get new information from a descriptive English text. Lack of motivation to learn English because it is a foreign language that they do not like because many find it difficult to understand. The online learning factor also triggers their low interest in learning, especially in understanding English reading texts. The last factor is the influence of students' social circles or environment in socializing. The learning environment factor that does not support students to like English is also one of the reasons why students find it difficult to focus and understand English, especially in reading comprehension of descriptive texts. The influence of friends who are lazy and do not like English can reduce their motivation to learn and understand English. Students can be motivated to learn English when their learning environment is very interested in English towards their playmates.

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