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# AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF READING COMPREHENSION DIFFICULTIES AT SMP MUHAMMADIYAH 9 BOARDING SCHOOL

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**Abstract.** The purposes of this study are to identify the difficulties faced by students in reading comprehension of English texts and to identify the factors causing students' difficulties in understanding reading English texts in class VIII-B students of SMP Muhammadiyah 9 Boarding School. This research is qualitative. Data collection techniques used are tests and interviews. This study uses data analysis techniques from Miles and Huberman (1992), there are three steps of data analysis, namely data reduction, data display and drawing conclusions. Based on the research results, students have difficulty in determining the main idea, understanding vocabulary, making conclusions, and looking for detailed information. The results of interviews regarding the factors that cause students' difficulties in understanding English reading texts are difficulties in understanding long sentences in the text, inadequate teacher intervention, and difficulties in understanding vocabulary, the home environment, and the school environment.

**Keywords** – Students' Perception; Reading Comprehension; Students' Comprehension Difficulties

## I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a communicative process that occurs between the reader and the writer. Reading is a close process that occurs by involving cognitive actions that work to create meaning or knowledge [1]. One of the activities that can provide a lot of information is reading [2]. The reader must concentrate and focus on the reading text to get the meaning of a reading text. Reading is the heart of education [3]. Therefore, it is important to learn reading skills because reading can provide valuable information and knowledge. Reading must be balanced with understanding to get the meaning and knowledge contained in the text. Understanding is a process that will occur continuously. When reading this process takes place before starting to read and will be followed by an increase in reading comprehension [4]. So reading comprehension is very important, having good reading comprehension will be able to capture the essence of what the author means. Reading comprehension is a process of constructing meaning by harmonizing some of these complex processes, including reading words, knowledge, words, and fluency [5]. That is, understanding is important to process in building the meaning of what the reader reads.

Since English in Indonesia is a foreign language, students may have difficulty understanding reading texts in English. There are five problems of students in reading English, especially when they try to understand the text. The five problems are symbols or alphabetic codes, vocabulary and sentence structure, cohesive devices and discourse markers, problems beyond reason and concepts [6]. Understanding the text is very important to realize reading skills. There are four aspects of reading comprehension that must be understood well, namely in determining the main idea, understanding vocabulary, conclusions, and detailed information [6]. These aspects are considered as difficulties faced by students in understanding the reading text. Difficulties will be seen from students' mistakes in the learning process. Many junior high school students often have difficulty in understanding reading. These difficulties result in poor reading results. These factors cause some difficulties in reading comprehension. The difficulty factor places students into two, namely external and internal. External factors include the family and school environment [7].

Difficulties in understanding reading texts must be known and solved by students and teachers because confusion will have a negative impact on student's motivation and learning ability. Reading difficulties will have a negative impact on schoolwork and student education because the need for reading becomes greater and wider [8].

Therefore, based on the results of conducting a preliminary study at SMP Muhammadiyah 9 Boarding School, by interviewing one of the Eighth Grade English teachers. It was found that the eighth-grade students had difficulty understanding reading texts, especially descriptive texts, there were still many students who made mistakes in answering reading questions. These errors resulted in their low reading achievement. The explanation can occur because they cannot understand the content or purpose of the reading text. Based on this problem, the researcher is

interested in analyzing students' difficulties in reading comprehension and the factors of difficulties faced by students in reading comprehension at SMP Muhammadiyah 9 Boarding School.

## II. METHOD

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative descriptive type of research. Qualitative analysis is an analysis that uses words arranged in an expanded text [9]. Qualitative research aims to gain insight into a broad and deep scope in a particular phenomenon. Researchers focus on the facts and characteristics of the phenomena that are happening in the school environment regarding students' difficulties in understanding reading texts.

The population in this study were all eighth-grade students at SMP Muhammadiyah 9 Boarding School. They were selected based on the preliminary research that they tend to have difficulty in understanding reading English texts. A sample is a small unit or part of the population that will be taken as guardianship of the entire existing population [10]. The researcher chose class VIII-B which had 25 students in the class and all of them are male. This class was chosen because they have studied descriptive text before.

The instruments used in this study were tests and interviews. The test is used as an indicator to find out whether students have difficulties or not. Students are asked to answer descriptive multiple-choice test questions that focus on aspects of reading comprehension are determining the main idea, understanding vocabulary, making inferences, and detailed information. The purpose of the test here is to recruit informants to be interviewed by the researcher. The data is to find out the difficulties faced by students in reading comprehension of English texts. Interviews are one way to find out the factors of difficulty faced by students in reading comprehension texts.

The data analysis techniques are 1. Data reduction is the selection of important data that has been collected, 2. The data displayed is data displayed in narrative form, 3. Drawing conclusions is draw or verification conclusions.

## III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### A. The Students Difficulties in Comprehending English Reading Text

Based on the results of the test data conducted on April 24, 2021, the researchers found several student difficulties, such as:

#### 1. Determining Main Idea

The data shows that most of the students have difficulty in determining the main idea. All students who answered the questions in determining the main idea, there were 24 incorrect answers. Students' difficulties in determining the main idea are in numbers 1 and 4. In question number "1. What is the main idea of the second paragraph?" Big mistake students answered "The dancer made around formation" and "Kecak and Fire dance are colossal acapella" the correct answer should be "The performance of Kecak and Fire dance". In question number "4. What is the main idea of the third paragraph?" The student's big mistake answered "The story comes to its climax" the correct answer should be "The ending of Kecak and Fire dance".

#### 2. Understanding Vocabulary

The data shows that most of the students have difficulty in understanding Vocabulary. All students who answered the questions in understanding vocabulary, there were 57 incorrect answers. Students' difficulties in understanding vocabulary are in numbers 3, 5, 8, and 10. In question number "5. The word "culture" in the last paragraph could be replaced by ..." Big mistake students answered "Rama and Sinta" the correct answer should be "ethnic". In question number "5. The word "good" in line 1 could be replaced by ...." The student's big mistake answered "amazing" and "spectacular" the correct answer should be "great". In question number "8. The word "Spectacular" in line 14 could be replaced by ...." the student's big mistake answered "legendary" the correct answer should be "amazing". In question number "10. The word "evil" in line 16 could be replaced by ...." The student's big mistake answered "good" the correct answer should be "iniquitous".

#### 3. Detailed Information

The data shows that most of the students have difficulty in detailed Information. All students who answered the questions in detailed Information, there were 23 incorrect answers. Students' difficulties in detailed Information are in numbers 2 and 7. In question number "2. How many times to reach the Uluwatu Temple from the airport?" Big mistake students answered "1,5 hour" the correct answer should be "1 hour". In question number "Kecak and Fire Dance are the traditional dance from ..." The student's big mistake answered "Aceh" the correct answer should be "Bali".

#### 4. Making Inference

The data shows that most of the students have difficulty in making inferences. All students who answered the questions in making inferences, there were 36 incorrect answers. Students' difficulties in making inference are in numbers 6 and 9. In question number "What can be inferred from the third paragraph?" Big mistake students answered "The lesson which can be taken that Hanoman is a monkey good" the correct answer should be "The lesson which can be taken that good always prevails against evil" In question number "9. What does the last paragraph

infer?" The student's big mistake answered "The dancer presented the traditional dance from Bali" the correct answer should be "The dancers and visitors are part of the show"

This shows that students have difficulty in reading comprehension from students' mistakes in answering the appropriate questions. There are four aspects of reading comprehension, namely in determining the main idea, understanding vocabulary, making inferences, and detailed information [6].

Based on the results of data analysis, the researchers found that students experienced difficulties in these four aspects. This is known from student worksheets relating to four aspects and difficulties faced by students in understanding English reading texts regarding difficulties in determining main ideas in paragraphs, difficulties in understanding vocabulary, difficulties in finding detailed information, and difficulties in making inferences in paragraphs.

## B. The Factor of Causing the Students Difficulties

Based on research findings of students' reading comprehension difficulties on students' worksheets and in interviews conducted on April 26, 2021, at SMP Muhammadiyah 9 Boarding School. The researcher found several factors of students having difficulty in understanding reading English texts. There were several factors of students' difficulties such as:

### 1. Difficulty in Understanding Long Sentences in the Reading Text

The first factor is understanding the point of view in the text, from the results of interviews with class VIII-B students answering.

Researcher : Are you having trouble understanding the meaning of a long text?

Student : Yes, I'm having trouble. Because I don't know what it means.

Based on interviews, when understanding long sentences in reading texts, students have difficulty because they do not know the contents of the reading material. The rest of the students could not understand the material making students need more time to find the meaning of the sentences and the correct answers. Students continue reading or repeating sentences to find out the meaning of the sentences, or they ask friends who are considered more proficient.

### 2. Insufficient Instructions Given by The Teacher

The second factor is based on what students have experienced that the instructions given by the teacher are not enough. From the results of interviews conducted with class VIII-B students and answered.

Researcher : oh the spirit is a little, ha..ha.. How do you teach an English teacher in your opinion?

Student : It's normal.

Researcher : Do you understand if the teacher teaches?

Student : I don't understand.

Researcher : Ok. Why, what makes you not understand?

Student : Yes, it's difficult, Sis. The teacher never gave anything different. Just explain, keep writing on the board, and keep working on the book.

Based on the interview, the teacher is the key in providing teaching and explanation of the material. Without a teacher, students will find it difficult to obtain and collect information. Teachers in teaching need to create alternative solutions or interesting ways to maintain the need for classroom teaching. The researcher found that the students of class VIII-B were not motivated, bored, and not interested when the learning process took place.

### 3. Understand in Understanding Vocabulary

The third factor is students' understand understanding of vocabulary. The results of interviews with students of class VIII-B and answered.

Researcher : Do you have difficulty when reading in understanding the meaning of words in English text?

Student : Very often, Sis, sometimes I understand. I also often do not know the meaning of the words. If you don't know, I'll skip it.

Based on the interview, in understanding the content of the reading it is necessary to involve understanding vocabulary, observing the relationship between words and reading concepts, formulating ideas, knowing the purpose of the author, evaluating the context, and making judgments. Learning to read written text will not be the same as learning to understand written text. It can be concluded, students cannot understand the meaning of a reading text because students do not know the meaning of the word. Thus, the researcher found that the students of class VIII-B at SMP Muhammadiyah 9 Boarding School lacked knowledge of vocabulary so that they had difficulty understanding English reading texts.

### 4. Home Environment

The fourth factor is the influence of the home environment. The results of interviews were conducted with class VIII-B students and answered.

Researcher : If that's the case, you only learn English at school or every day. Does it mean that learning is not just in class at home or after school?

Student : No, Sis. I only learn it in class. Because we are also in the hostel.

Based on the interviews above, the researchers found that the factors causing students' difficulties in understanding reading were related to their home environment. They have no desire to read English texts and they are lazy to read English texts which they think are difficult to understand. Another factor is seen from their learning motivation which is very lacking in learning English and the students are in a dormitory where they are far from their parents with various activities during the dormitory. So that parents cannot control them in learning, and teachers may not be able to pay attention to every student from a large number of students continuously.

#### 5. School Environment

The fifth factor is the influence of the school environment. The results of interviews with students of class VIII-B and answered.

Researcher : *Do you like learning English?*

Student : *It's normal, Sis.*

Researcher : *Do you like reading English books in the library or textbooks?*

Student : *I don't like it, Sis, because the words are difficult, I don't understand.*

Researcher : *What do you usually read?*

Student : *I don't know, Sis.*

Researcher : *Do you think learning English here is fun, right?*

Student : *It's normal, Sis, because it's difficult and I don't like it.*

Based on the interview above, the last factor that can cause students to face difficulties in reading comprehension is their school environment. They say that reading English is one of the activities they don't like because they do not understand the meaning. The influence of the school environment such as the availability of reading books for students is inadequate or students do not know and do not care that there are English books that they can read. Make students less interested in reading and low student interest in reading. Most of the students of class VIII-B have less prior knowledge in reading English texts.

The difficulty factor places students into two, namely external and internal. External factors include the family and school environment [7].

Based on the results of interviews, researchers found five factors that affect students' difficulties in understanding English reading texts. The first factor is the difficulty in understanding long sentences in the reading text. Students had difficulty because they did not know the contents of the reading material, and they needed time to understand long sentences. The second factor is the lack of instruction given by the teacher. The teacher's monotonous and unattractive way of teaching makes students unmotivated, bored, and uninterested when the learning process occurs. The third factor is understood in understanding vocabulary. Students are lacking in vocabulary knowledge so that they have difficulty understanding the meaning and do not know the meaning of words. The fourth factor is the home environment. The role of parents who cannot control them in learning makes students less motivated in learning English. The last factor is the school environment. The influence of the school environment such as the availability of reading books for students is inadequate or students do not know and do not care about English books that they can read, make students less interested in reading and low student interest in reading.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation in the previous chapter of the results of student worksheets and interviews. It can be concluded that most students have difficulty in determining the main idea, making conclusions, understanding vocabulary, and detailed information. Not only that, but most students also have difficulty understanding the structure of the text, have limited vocabulary, and have difficulty understanding the teaching material. In addition, they do not understand the meaning of long texts, and students have difficulty in receiving information from the text or material.

In the results of interviews, researchers found five factors that influence students' difficulties in understanding English reading texts. The first factor is the difficulty in understanding long sentences in the reading text. The second factor is the lack of instruction given by the teacher. The third factor is understanding in understanding vocabulary. The fourth factor is the home environment. The last factor is the school environment.

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