



ASSESSING THE LEVEL OF THE STUDENT'S READING COMPREHENSION ABILITIES AND THEIR DIFFICULTIES

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ABSTRACT

Students can acquire and comprehend information from a variety of books because to reading comprehension, a crucial cognitive ability. Numerous internal and external elements, including vocabulary, prior knowledge, motivation, and interest in reading materials, might affect how difficult it is for students to comprehend what they read. The purpose of this study is to determine and examine the obstacles that students encounter when trying to understand texts, as well as the elements that lead to these obstacles. According to the study's findings, children frequently have trouble understanding at the inferential and evaluative levels, where they must draw connections between information that isn't presented in the text. Reading comprehension was also found to be significantly hampered by a lack of background information and a restricted vocabulary. The researcher employed a descriptive qualitative research design for this investigation. Yayan Alpian and S.W. (Anggraeni 2019) state that "descriptive research is non-experimental research because it does not control and manipulate research variables." Descriptive research, then, is study that only characterizes and interprets research items based on their actual characteristics. Research subjects or units of analysis are the terms used to describe the population and sample in qualitative research (Feronika, L. 2016). kids in class IX at SMP N 7 Medan, which included up to 18 kids, served as the study's subjects. As a result, reading comprehension is significantly influenced by vocabulary and interest aspects. Pupils who don't enjoy reading or have a small vocabulary typically take longer to comprehend literature. Consequently, it is critical that educators create instructional practices that might improve students' vocabulary and spark their interest in reading.

Keywords: *Vocabulary, abilities, reading, students' reading comprehension, development of Curricula*



INTRODUCTION

Understanding how to read is a useful lifelong ability. The capacity to finish reading assignments fast and effortlessly while also gaining a deeper knowledge to improve grades and accelerate learning is a sign of good reading. According to Rahim (2019), reading is one of the abilities that students need to learn when they are in school because it is closely associated to their learning process. Reading comprehension and media awareness are therefore essential.

Reading proficiency is essential to kids' whole educational journey, beginning in junior high school grade 1. According to (Sparapani et al. 2018), reading abilities can be taught to young children as they learn to engage with others and build their social communication skills. Reading is an initial activity that involves recognizing letters or written symbols and pronouncing them. It is necessary for students to be able to sound a writing fluently, clearly, perfectly, and with natural intonation, as well as to understand the text they are reading, according to Wahyuni and Alpien (2020: p. 22).

The four language skills that pupils need to learn or be taught when they enter school are speaking, listening, reading, and writing, according to Pratiwi (2020). (Mumpuno & Afifah, 2022) state that teachers frequently deal with students who struggle with reading, particularly in lower grades. Letter recognition issues, word-by-word reading, improper paraphrasing, omissions, repetitions, reversals, insertions, substitutions, employing lip movements, index fingers, and head, and consonant issues are some of these challenges (Helmie, 2022).

Teachers frequently struggle to address their pupils' learning challenges. Teachers can assist students in overcoming these challenges and realizing their full potential by using effective tactics. Wilson (2020) asserts that teachers may assist students in overcoming obstacles and achieving both academic and personal success by comprehending their needs, putting suitable strategies into practice, and cooperating with others. According to Hammons (2020), every student has a different history, set of skills, and preferred method of learning. Some of them might have trouble understanding the lessons, which could have an impact on their academic performance.

According to Asnur (2019), one of the elements that determines a student's success is their teacher. Teachers must thus create lesson plans in order to help pupils overcome learning obstacles. But since the goal of this study is to help kids overcome their reading challenges, teachers must work hard to help students develop their reading abilities. Students' struggles with beginning reading, which are largely impacted by internal variables, are one of the challenges to the teaching and learning



process (Nurviyani & Helmie, 2023). According to (Jayanti et al., 2020), the state of the students themselves indicates how prepared they are to accept instruction from teachers. Self-motivation, or motivation, is necessary to follow learning. Students who lack desire for learning will have unfavorable opinions about school. Students' early reading habits are also significantly impacted by motivation. the drive to become proficient readers at their level. Additionally, physical health is a critical component of learning. Starting to read might be challenging for kids who are highly motivated to learn but whose physical health frequently suffers from illnesses or disabilities (Helmie et al., 2024).

Class IX at SMP N 7 Medan experienced the same issue. In class IX of SMP N 7 Medan, English instruction is still taught using traditional methods that make the teacher the focal point of the learning process and make the pupils passive. The findings of observations and interviews with SMP N 7 Medan's class IX teachers indicate that the reading proficiency of the pupils in class XI is still lacking. The low result on the researcher's pre-action reading exam serves as proof of this. Lack of comprehension of the reading's contents, inability to identify the reading's subject, and inability to extract information from the read text are characteristics of students' reading incapacity.

The primary issue that needs to be addressed right away is the low reading proficiency of SMP N 7 Medan's grade IX students. In actuality, pupils in grade IX at SMP N 7 Medan have not been actively participated in their reading instruction. Reading instruction that has been put into practice thus far still employs traditional techniques, such as giving pupils reading materials and having them respond to questions about what they have read. Students that learn in this way are less motivated to pay attention in class, which leads to subpar learning and subpar reading comprehension abilities.

According to Morris (2019), teachers need to have strategies for dealing with students' learning difficulties because these students need special attention or guidance from their parents or teachers during the learning process so they can follow other students' journeys.

This study theoretically identifies reading issues among students. The findings of this study can enhance the creation of successful teaching resources and learning techniques, as well as assist in the development of curricula, instructional methods, and assessments that are suitable for the needs of the students.



In practice, the findings of this research should:

1. Teachers are able to draw conclusions and employ the most effective approach while instructing children in reading.
2. Students can utilize this study as a source of information on reading challenges, particularly the associated factors and remedies.
3. As supplementary data for future studies on the experience of teaching English, particularly in reading.

METHODS

The researcher employed a descriptive qualitative research design for this investigation. Yayan Alpian and S.W. (Anggraeni 2019) state that "descriptive research is non-experimental research because it does not control and manipulate research variables." Descriptive research, then, is study that only characterizes and interprets research items based on their actual characteristics. Research subjects or units of analysis are the terms used to describe the population and sample in qualitative research (Feronika, L. 2016). kids in class IX at SMP N 7 Medan, which included up to 18 kids, served as the study's subjects.

Test procedures, questionnaires, observations, interviews, and documentation are the methods of collecting employed in this study. In order to directly learn about the challenges and issues that students face, researchers in this study employed observation techniques. In order to learn the truth regarding the challenges in the classroom, researchers employ interviewing techniques. Researchers employ test procedures with multiple students to see the findings of ten surveys that students must fill out and use. Researchers employ questionnaire methods to gather data by asking student subjects a series of questions. In this study, documentation is used to determine what the pupils are doing in the classroom. Following the acquisition of the necessary data, qualitative data analysis methods are used to examine the data (Akda & Dafit, 2021).

(Mawardi 2019) states that "Qualitative research uses the scientific environment as a source of data. The main study for qualitative research is events that occur in a social situation. Researchers go to the location, understand and study the situation. The study was conducted at the time the interaction took place at the scene. Researchers observe, record, ask questions, and explore sources that are closely related to the events that occurred at that time."

1. Information



The information and knowledge regarding the barriers and causes of students' reading difficulties comprise the study's data. Information gathered through interviews, testing procedures, and data collection documentation.

2. Data source

The data source in this study was conducted directly in class, namely from 15 students (half the class), in Class XI of SMP N 7 Medan. The questionnaires, interviews, and documentation with the study participants served as the study's first sources of data.

The following are data collection methods that researchers will use, specifically questionnaire assessments, student tests, student interviews, and student documentation:

Test

A test is a method by which a person administers a test to a number of subjects in order to see the outcomes of the subjects' efforts. In order to administer the exam, researchers give students ten questionnaires to complete. First, students must answer the questions on the questionnaire. The test methods that researchers employ are as follows.

Questionnaire

The following actions are performed to uncover ways to get past the challenges of learning to read:

- a. Asking kids to rate their own reading proficiency.
- b. Sending out questionnaires to pupils based on their individual situations.
- c. Analyzing the data from questionnaire responses, cause it gives beneficial information about their challenges then the researcher can give solutions.

Interview

Researchers utilize interviews as a method of gathering data when they want to do a preliminary investigation to identify issues that need further investigation and when they want to learn more in-depth information from respondents.

Documentation

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In qualitative research, documentation serves as a supplement to the methodologies of observation and interviewing.

To analyze the data in this study, the researcher will employ both descriptive and qualitative data. To improve one's own understanding and communicate findings to others, qualitative data analysis entails arranging and methodically analyzing field notes, interview transcripts, and other resources. In contrast, qualitative data analysis is an inductive process that involves condensing, displaying, and drawing/verifying conclusions from the obtained data in order to identify patterns and hypotheses.

Data Consolidation, in this part the researcher was selecting, streamlining, and abstracting information from provided notes, interview transcripts, and other empirical materials is known as data condensation. By concentrating on the most crucial details and removing the less vital ones, data condensation was accomplished in this study. Selecting information from observations and interviews, concentrating on the reasons behind kids' reading challenges, and turning the findings into comprehensible written transcripts were all steps in the condensing process. Second, data Presentation, in this part the writer presenting the information is the next stage after summarizing the facts; a presentation is a collection of organized material that makes it easier to make decisions and take action.

Data can be displayed in qualitative research using flowcharts, charts, descriptions, and linkages between categories. Through a variety of tasks, including gathering written materials from interviews regarding students' reading challenges and arranging video recordings of class presentations for observation notes, this study was conducted. And last part was drawing conclusions/verification, in this part the researcher was making inferences and confirming. Following the presentation of the data, the next stage of data analysis techniques is to make inferences or confirm. However, if no additional evidence is discovered through additional data collecting, the initial conclusion is still tentative and subject to change. The data was then categorized by the researcher in accordance with the analysis requirements pertaining to the idea of student challenges proposed by Bygate (2008) and Ur (2006). To make inferences regarding the reading challenges of students in class IX of SMP N 7 Medan, the data was compared with the research problem and objectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

General Description of Research Location

SMP Negeri 7 Medan, situated in Jl.h. Adam Malik No. 12, Medan Barat District, Medan City, North Sumatra, is where this study was carried out. The significance of the research topic and the traits of the school's student body led to the selection of this study site. Since the kids at this school come from a variety of backgrounds, it is hoped that the study's findings would give a fair picture of how challenging reading

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comprehension is for all of the children in the classroom.

Description of Research Results

Based on the findings of reading comprehension assessments, questionnaires, teacher and student interviews, and other data, the researcher at this point assessed the degree of difficulty of the students' reading comprehension. Ten to fifteen randomly chosen grade IX students participated in this study.

Table of Reading Comprehension Test and Questionnaire Results

Aspects of understanding	of difficulty level	student presentation	description
Basic Understanding	Easy	70%	Most students can understand explicit information in the text.
Synthesis and Evaluation Understanding	Medium	50%	Students struggle to make inferences or comprehend information that isn't explicitly stated in the text.
Vocabulary			



Reading Motivation and Interest			
Inferential Understanding			
Analytical Understanding	High Difficulty	40%	Many pupils struggle to recognize arguments and comprehend text structure.

Interview Results

Teachers' and students' responses revealed a number of elements that affect how challenging a student's reading comprehension is. Among the primary conclusions reached are limited Vocabulary, in this case, the majority of kids still struggle with increasingly difficult words, particularly when reading texts that aren't narrative. New vocabulary frequently makes comprehension more difficult. Second, Lack of Inferential Skills, in this part, a lot of pupils struggle to deduce meaning from context or to decipher implied signals; they can only comprehend information that is explicitly explained. And the last Low Reading Interest Pupils that have little interest in the material they are reading demonstrate a poorer comprehension level. Many students confess to being disinterested and lacking enthusiasm when reading the assigned material.

Analysis of Research Results

Based on information gathered from the test, reading comprehension questionnaire, and interview, the study demonstrates that a number of internal and external factors affect how difficult a student's reading comprehension is.



Students typically struggle with reading comprehension at a basic to inferential level. Students find it easier to grasp basic comprehension, which includes the capacity to recognize explicit information. However, the majority of students struggle when challenged to comprehend texts that call for analytical and inferential abilities. Students find it difficult to understand texts with more formal language and intricate arrangements.

First, Level of Difficulty in Basic Comprehension, while some students still struggled to grasp the primary idea of a longer text, the majority of students were able to comprehend the text's direct facts. Second, the Inferential Comprehension Level of Difficulty, a large number of pupils struggled to infer or forecast using the text's information. Third, Level of Analytical Comprehension Difficulty, Students had a hard time comprehending the text's organization and the connections between its many sections. Most pupils still lack the higher analytical skills necessary to understand more complicated expository and argumentative texts.

Factors Affecting Students' Reading Comprehension

According to grade IX teacher and student interviews, a number of factors influence pupils' reading comprehension, including:

- a. **Restricted Vocabulary:**
Pupils who struggle to comprehend increasingly complicated texts typically have a restricted vocabulary. They frequently struggle to understand new, unfamiliar terms, making it impossible for them to comprehend the full text.
- b. **Cognitive Ability:**
Students' comprehension of texts is also influenced by their cognitive capacities, including memory and attention. Due to their inability to retain information, students with attention issues or poorer cognitive capacities sometimes struggle to comprehend the full reading.
- c. **Motivation and Interest:**
Students who are disinterested in the reading material are typically less attentive and more lethargic. This significantly affects their comprehension level because intrinsic motivation to read and learn more is a fundamental factor in reading comprehension.



DISCUSSION

The study's findings are consistent with other research that indicates a number of characteristics, including vocabulary, inferential skills, reading interest and motivation, and basic reading skills, significantly impact students' reading comprehension difficulties. Most children can recognize explicit information at the most basic level of comprehension, but deeper understanding such as inferential and analytical understanding requires higher skills, which many kids have not yet acquired.

The absence of analytical and inferential skills suggests that pupils are not given enough opportunities to hone their critical and analytical thinking abilities during the educational process. Teachers' curricula and methods of instruction must take this into account.

Additionally, reading comprehension is significantly influenced by vocabulary and interest aspects. Pupils who don't enjoy reading or have a small vocabulary typically take longer to comprehend literature. Consequently, it is critical that educators create instructional practices that might improve students' vocabulary and spark their interest in reading.

CONCLUSION

Several important conclusions can be drawn from the research findings on students' reading comprehension difficulty levels, including the following:

Reading Comprehension Difficulty Levels:

- a. Basic Knowledge
- b. Inferential Knowledge
- c. Analytical Comprehension
- d. Synthesis and Evaluation Comprehension
- e. Vocabulary
- f. Reading Motivation and Interest

It is intended that by putting these recommendations into practice, students' reading comprehension difficulties will be lessened and their reading abilities will grow more fully. Students who get instruction that prioritizes the development of increasingly sophisticated reading abilities will be better equipped to handle the difficulties of comprehending a variety of text kinds.



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