THE STUDENTS' ABILITY
IN LITERAL READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract

To find out the students' ability in reading comprehension is the purpose of this study. The research population was the third year students which consisted of three parallel clasess. For selecting sample, random sampling was used by the reseacher for taking five students in each class. Then, totally 15 students became as the sample. The data collection was taken through two kinds of instruments, namely non-test and test. Non-test consisted of questionaire, and interview meanwhile test itself used was on the literal comprehension level. In analyzing the data, the non test was analyzed descriptively then the test was analyzed statistically. The result of test shows that the mean score of students is 71. In short, the ability of the third year students of SMP Negeri 11 Palu in reading comprehension text is categorized as good level.

Keywords: ability, reading comprehension, Narrative texts.

BACKGROUND

One of essential part of English skills in language learning is reading, especially it refers to students of junior high school. It has to be mastered by them. By mastering it, the students must be easy to undestand, to get meaning message and information from the text based on what they read. The more they read, the better knowledge they understand. It is supported by Grabe and Stoller (2011: 3) that reading is the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately. It means that through reading text, we can communicate with it by cooperating between eyes movements, brainwork, and understanding well.

Concerning with learning reading comprehension in junior high school, reading comprehension is not easy to understand instantly. Materials, contexts, and also lenght of the text must be paid more attention. Then, kind of materials of reading comprehension vary such as recount, procedure, essay, narrative, and so forth. Indeed, all of them based on students' levels. Inappropriate materials,

lack of vocabulary and grammar, and student's motivation become students' reasons to be difficult to catch information from reading text.

According to Harwood (2010: 132) "reading process is an evaluation of comprehension, or the reader makes sense of the material that he or she is reading. If the messages have been already known by the reader, the comprehension is achieved. It means reading comprehension is essentially the ability to understand what she/he has already read. If someone reads, she/he tries to obtain messages or information that written by author. In opposite, if they read without understanding of what they are reading, indeed they have wasted their time.

As mentioned beforehand that it is not easy to students to master reading comprehension. Many students think that it is a problem. They cannot communicate with it. It is also stated by Day and Bamford (2000) that in general, students who are learning to read in English as a Foreign Language find it a difficult process, and as a result, they do not enjoy

it. In short, many EFL learners still encounter problems or difficulties when trying to understand an English text.

Relating to the previou statement, students' difficulty in comprehending the texts also are found in some researches as follows: Jakfar (2007) stated that he noticed many students have difficulty in understanding certain words and the strategy of teaching reading comprehension applied at the school was traditional in which the students were asked to translate the text.

Another research was conducted by Najamuddin (2009) who stated that the condition was caused by some problems: 1) the English teachers are lack of teaching strategy to handle the students to be more active toward understanding the materials, 2) the students have low motivation and sometimes are passive in learning English, 3) the materials presented in the textbook were difficult for the students, and the English teachers did not modify and develop materials from the textbook based on the students' interest.

Rodli (2009) stated that first; the students' ability in mastering reading skill is still low. It is indicated by their difficulties to find the topic of a paragraph or text, their confusion to find the main idea of a paragraph and the supporting idea, to understand reference, to deduce meaning from context and also they do not have adequate vocabulary. Second, the teacher unconsciously tended to test their students, not to teach them.

That was why the unsatisfactory result of the students' reading comprehension was caused not only by the students but also by the unsuitable strategy utilized by the teacher in teaching and learning process and the decrease of interaction between the teacher and students. It occurred not only in junior high school but also in university level.

Also, the researcher found out some problems of the third year students of SMP Negeri 11 Palu for instance lack

vocabulary and grammar, and motivation of students. These data were accumulated from prelimenary observation. Every student has different ability level to undertand reading text. It can be easy some students catch and understand information from text meanwhile others cannot. In addition, national examination for English course is dominated by reading comprehension text in which almost all of questions are answered based on text. So, the core purpose of the research is to find out the ability of the third year students of SMP Negeri 11 Palu in reading comprehension. How far the students' ability in reading comprehension is determined by result of the test.

As mentioned in previous statements that the ability of individual students differs in comprehending reading text, so the researcher formulated the research questions as follows: What is the ability of the third year students of SMP Negeri 11 Palu in reading comprehension?. The objective of the research is to find put ability of the third year students of SMP Negeri 11 Palu in reading comprehension. This research focuses on the ability of the third students of SMP Negeri 11 Palu in Literal reading comprehension in narrative text.

As known, the teaching of reading begins from the lower level of comprehension respectively. According to Brassel and Rasinki (2008:17) literal comprehension requires a reader to be able retelling and recalling the fact or information presented in a text. At this level, the teacher can ask students to find out informatio and ideas that are explicitly stated in the text. Literal reading comprehension involves the idea and fact that directly stated in printed pages. It means students can get information direclty from text such as identifying main idea, supporting details, categorizing, outlining and summarizing. The reader is trying to better understand what is actually happening within the text.

There are some literal reading comprehension questions such as what words state the main idea of the story?, when it happened? Who is a boy? how does the author summarize what she/he is saying?, outlining the first paragraph of the story!, what happened first, second and last?, How are these things alike? and so on.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

The method used in this research is a descriptive research aimed to describe characterisics of the subject. In this case, the research was designed to investigate the ability of the third year students of SMP Negeri 11 Palu in reading comprehension by using observation, interview, questionnaire and test as techniques of data collection.

According to Arikunto (2002:108) "population is a set or collection of all elements possessing one or more attributes of interest. From this statement, the population is the third year students of SMP Negeri 11 Palu which consists of three classes. They are 3A, 3B, and 3C that total number of population is 60 students.

Technique for selecting sample is through random sampling technique. For selecting the samples is to take five students from each class under the agreement of teacher. She prepared thee boxes containing number 1-20 (total students of every class). Each box was shaken and asked every student took out one paper from the box. The students who got number 1-5 are the real sample. Totally, there were 15 students as the samples.

In collecting data of the research, the researcher applied two kinds of instruments as follows: a) non-test consisted of observation, questionnaire, and interview, b) test used to describe ability of the students in literal reading comprehension.

The researcher observed the atmopshere classroom dealing with the research process like, the condition of class, capacity of the students in reading skill, teaching reading process and reading text. Then, she interviewed the English teacher for taking information about her teaching reading comprehension experience. After being interviewed by the researcher, questionnaire consisting 10 items with four options for each item was given to the students.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data analysis as drew beforehand, the research findings are observation in which was conducted during English teaching. She gave one passage with the title Maling Kundang. Before going to core activity, in preliminary activities, the teacher warmed up the students by raising some questions relating to the material, such as, do you know Maling Kundang? What do you know about him?. Whilst activities, the teacher asked some students to read the paragraph of passage and she explained the main idea of the passage. After that, she asked the students about difficulties words and asked them to answer the questions in reading text. In addition, in presenting the reading text, the teacher used English dominantly; the students enjoyed the subject and many students looked active when she gave questions orally but some other students looked passive as well.

There are some the interview results as follows:

1. The teacher found difficulties in teaching reading because students still lacked vocabulary, structure and grammar. But, the most difficulty was lack of vocabulary. Having lacked of vocabulary made by students got difficulties to understand reading text. Students got bored and lost motivation to continue reading.
2. Some students' ability in comprehending text was still less/poor. They looked passive and sometimes bored toward materials given. The

teacher doesn't give up to support and help the students for easy comprehending reading text. She always makes students enjoy with materials and make them as active as possible.

3. The difficulties that the students faced were in understanding reading text because their vocabulary was very poor.

4. In process teaching reading, the teacher used three phase techniques. They consisted of pre-reading stage, whilst-reading stage, and post-reading stage.

5. The teacher suggests to students to increase their vocabulary by writing words, reading aloud, practicing in their daily activities, and having a good dictionary.

The Result of Questionnaire

The result of questionnaire was conducted before giving test. The following tables show various comments/answers of different samples.

Table 1. Frequency in Reading English Text by Students

No.	Question	Options	Freq.	%
1.	How often do you read English text?	a. always	7	47%
		b. sometimes	8	53%
		c. rarely	0	0%
		d. never	0	0%
			15	100%

Table 1 shows the students' frequency data in reading comprehension. There are 7 students or 47% always read English text and 8 students or 53% answer that they sometimes read reading English texts. It means that majority of students' reading comprehension tend sometimes doing reading English text activity.

Table 2. Frequency in Reading English Text by Students

No.	Question	Options	Freq.	%
2.	When reading English text, do you understand it fully?	a. Always	3	20%
		b. sometimes	12	80%
		c. rarely	0	0%
		d. never	0	0%
			15	100%

Table 2 describes only 3 students or 20% quite understand whole content of reading passage, and 12 students or 80% state that they sometimes comprehend full content of reading text. From this fact, it is clear that there are fewer students comprehend whole content of the reading text.

Table 3. Frequency in Reading English Text by Students

No.	Question	Options	Freq.	%
3.	Do you feel interested in study reading comprehension?	a. Very interested	2	13,33%
		b. Interested	11	73,33%
		c. Less interested	2	13,33%
		d. Not interested	0	0%
			15	100%

Based on table 3, there are only 2 students or 13,33% state very interested in learning reading comprehension. There are 11 students or 73,33% interested in reading comprehension and 2 students or 13,33% less interested. She concludes that most students or 73,33% are interested in comprehending reading passage.

Table 4. Students' opinions about level of difficulty in comprehending reading text

No.	Question	Options	Freq.	%
4.	How do you think about level of difficulty in reading comprehension?	a. Very easy	0	0%
		b. Easy	10	67%
		c. Difficult	5	33%
		d. Very difficult	0	0%
			15	100%

As seen in table 4, there are 10 students or 67% regard level of difficulty in reading comprehension easy meanwhile 5 students or 33% show that the reading comprehension material is easy. It can be concluded that they can understand reading comprehension passage.

Table 5. Students' ways in comprehending vocabulary in reading texts

No.	Question	Options	Freq.	%
5.	In what way do you know the meaning of vocabulary in reading text?	a. Often open dictionary	14	93%
		b. Read a lot of books	1	
		c. Memorizing vocabulary	0	0%
		d. Others	0	0%
			15	100%

Table 5 talks about how the students know the meaning of vocabulary in reading text. Most of students or 93% often open dictionary to comprehend vocabulary and 1 student or 7% read a lot of books.

Table 6. The students' difficulty in reading comprehension

No.	Question	Options	Freq.	%
6.	What difficulty do you find when reading English text?	a. Lack of vocabulary	8	53%
		b. Lack of pronunciation	0	0%
		c. Lack of structure	3	20%
		d. a, b, and c	4	27%
			15	100%

Question number 6 is about the difficulties that faced by students in reading comprehension. In fact, there are 8 students lack vocabulary or 53% while lack of structure consists of 3 students or 20%, and 4 students or 27% have lack of vocabulary, lack of structure, and lack of grammar. She analyses that half of number of students less in vocabulary and the students who lack of pronunciation and structure are almost same in number.

Table 7. The students' ways to solve their difficulties

No	Question	Options	Freq.	%
7.	How do you solve the difficulty that you find in reading comprehension?	a. Asking English teacher	10	67%
		b. asking friend	5	33%
		c. reading grammar	0	0%
		d. give up reading	0	0%
			15	100%

In table 7, the students' ways to solve their difficulties are asking English teacher as much 10 students or 67% while the students who ask classmate consist of 5 students or 33%. It shows that they still struggle in comprehending reading text and almost all students ask their teacher to solve their difficulties it.

Table 8. Grammar mastery influence toward the students' reading comprehension

No.	Question	Options	Freq.	%
8.	Does the mastery of English grammar/structure support skjyour knowledge?	a. Very supporting	4	26,67%
		b. Supporting	10	66,67%
		c. Less supporting	1	6,67%
		d. Not supporting	0	0%
			15	100%

Related to table 8, there are 4 students or 47% can master grammar dealing with reading comprehension, 10 students or 53% are supported and 1 student or 6,67% answers less supported.

Table 9. The students' responds toward their feeling boring in reading English text

No.	Question	Options	Freq.	%
9.	Do you often get bored in reading English text?	a. Yes/always	0	0%
		b. sometimes	5	33,33%
		c. rarely	5	33,33%
		d. never	5	33,33%
			15	100%

The table 9 shows no students get bored while reading the text, whereas all students respond similarly namely sometimes, rarely and never option.

Table 10. The students' opinion about the way of the English teacher in teaching reading comprehension

No.	Question	Options	Freq.	%
10.	In your opinion, how does your English teacher present reading comprehension material?	a. Very good	6	40%
		b. good	9	60%
		c. less	0	0%
		d. bad	0	0%
			15	100%

We can see the students' option about teacher's way in teaching reading comprehension, 6 students or 40% answer very good and 9 students (60%) state good. In other words, the teacher has a good way for presenting reading comprehension passage.

The Result of Test

Test was used to describe students' ability in literal reading comprehension. The result is presented in table as follows:

Table 11: The students' score in literal reading comprehension

No.	Initials	Maximum Scores	Obtained scores	Individual scores
1	S1	15	13	87
2	S15	15	13	87
3	S4	15	12	80
4	S2	15	12	80
5	S8	15	12	80
6	S9	15	11	73
7	S10	15	11	73
8	S12	15	11	73
9	S6	15	11	73
10	S14	15	10	67
11	S3	15	9	60
12	S5	15	9	60
13	S7	15	9	60
14	S13	15	9	60
15	S11	15	8	53
			Total	1067

After calculating the students' score, she computed the mean score of their score by using the formula written by Sudijono, as follows:

$$Mx = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

$$= \frac{1067}{15} = 71$$

The result of mean score was used for classifying the students' ability in literal reading comprehension based on theory of Sudijono (2012). The mean score was 71. It indicated that the students' ability in literal reading comprehension was categorized good level.

Table 12: The students' individual score in literal reading comprehension level

No.	Initials	Max. Scores	Obtained scores	Individual scores	Classification
1	S1	15	13	87	Very good
2	S15	15	13	87	Very good
3	S4	15	12	80	good
4	S2	15	12	80	good
5	S8	15	12	80	good
6	S9	15	11	73	good
7	S10	15	11	73	good
8	S12	15	11	73	good
9	S6	15	11	73	good
10	S14	15	10	67	enough
11	S3	15	9	60	enough
12	S5	15	9	60	enough
13	S7	15	9	60	enough
14	S13	15	9	60	enough
15	S11	15	8	53	poor
		total		1067	

The table shows the students' individual score in literal reading comprehension level that there are two students has the highest score namely 87 categorized as very good and 1 students has the lowest score namely 53 categorized as poor.

Table 13. The Rate of percentage of the students' individual level in comprehending text

No.	Categories/level	Scores	Freq.	Percentage
1	Very good	85-100	2	13%
2	Good	70-84	7	47%
3	Enough	55-69	5	33%
4	Poor	40-54	1	7%
5	Very poor	<39	-	0%
	Total		15	100%

In relation to the table 13, there are 2 students or 13% included in the very good level., 7 students or 47% were in good level, 5 students or 33% included in enough level, and only one student or 7% was in poor level. To sum up, almost 50% students are easy to comprehend reading passages.

DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher argues some ideas of the students as representative of the third year students of SMP Negeri 11 Palu. First of all, she

highlight students' comments relating to the questionnaire given. It was concluded that majority of students sometimes read English test (53%). It indicates reading English has important input to enhance their ability in comprehending reading text.

But in fact, merely 20% students understand the whole content while 80% students sometimes comprehend all of reading comprehension text. It is clear that less students comprehend whole content of reading text. It is because lack of vocabulary (53%) tent difficult to students and followed by lack of grammar and structure. Grammar mastery influences toward their comprehending reading text. It is proved by 10 students or (67%) respond in questionnaire. It means the students haven't mastered English sub skills yet or had difficulty especially vocabulary.

It is important to consider how to overcome difficulty in reading comprehension. Most of the students often open dictionary to comprehend vocabulary on reading text (93%). In short, students' reading comprehension activity tends to use dictionary to find out meaning of words.

In teaching reading, the figure of the English teacher is important to make the students interested and enjoy toward the subject. From the data, most of students (86%) were interested in learning reading comprehension. Surely, it was because positive impact of her strategy in conveying materials.

Based on the computation of students' achievement, the reseacher provides her opinion in order to give more description and explanation. The result shows that the students' ability of third year of SMP Negeri 11 Palu in comprehending text is categorised good level. It is proved by mean score of the test is 71. While the scores obtained from the rate of percentage of the students' individual level in reading comprehension given indicated that none of 15 students got very poor level. It means the rate of percentage of it was in good level.

The result of questionnaire shows some difficulties in reading comprehension was solved by opening dictionary, asked their teacher or friend, and also the teacher has a good way to make sure her students easier comprehend the texts.
It seems through questionnaire, the students can pour out their opinions and feelings objectively about English course. In brief, the responses of students through it are satisfactory as well as the interview with the English teacher.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

After analyzing the data by using descriptive ad statistics analysis, the research concluded that the ability of the third year students of SMP Negeri 11 Palu in reading comprehension is categorized good. It showed that mean score of students is 71. Based on supporting data, the difficulties of the students were mostly in vocabulary mastery. Most of students asked their teacher and friends to solve their difficulties in reading comprehension.

Based on the conclusion, there are some suggestions that should be paid attention. Firstly, students should memorize more vocabulary and learn some reading texts supported by stock of vocabulary. Secondly, the teacher should give more exercise and homework. Furthermore, the exercise ad homework given should be various in types, not monotonous. The last, the teacher should apply various technique, strategies in teaching reading to avoid the monotonous atmosphere. Therefore, the students' ability in literal reading comprehension would maximum.

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