



An Analysis of EFL Students' Reading Ability at SMA Pembangunan Padang

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Abstract

This study aimed to describe the students' reading ability and the causes of problems in reading English at SMA Pembangunan Padang. The population of this research was the 12th grade of natural science students of SMA Pembangunan Padang consist of 92 students. The sample was taken through proportional random sampling and the number was 30 students. The instruments of this research were the reading test and interview. Result of the analysis showed that the students' reading abilities were at in inadequate and failing category and they have problems with determining main idea, making inference, reference, understanding vocabulary, detail information, factual and negative factual information. Then, the factors that cause their reading problems are literal comprehension (trouble in identifying the main idea from a long text and the location of main idea, trouble in differentiating the main idea from the supporting details), inferential comprehension (trouble in understanding the content of the text and figure the conclusion of the text), vocabulary knowledge (vocabulary limitation, don't understand pronouns), critical thinking (trouble in understanding implied information, hard to determine the information referred to in a pronoun, trouble in determine which statement is true or false), and classroom environment that dealt with quality of teaching (teacher doesn't teach new vocabulary specifically and unclear explanation to help them able to make the inference). The findings suggest pedagogical implications for the promoting the EFL learners' reading ability.

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INTRODUCTION

High school students in Indonesia learn English by using the 2013 curriculum which focuses on spoken (speaking and listening) and written (writing and reading) language. In spoken language, they are usually taught about daily conversation while in the written language they are taught the functional text and short functional text. For written language, the focus is on reading skills as stated in basic competence

number 4 that they must be able to capture the context of a text which means reading comprehension. To reach this goal, students are given various texts and they are taught aspects of language which are usually found in reading texts. The text structure and the function of the text are also explained to the students in order to help the gaining the comprehension ability.

But, having reading comprehension ability isn't easy task for Indonesian students that learn English as a foreign language. Moreover, many of them also does not have a good reading habit. These phenomena have been discussed on some research done by Noviana (2019), Rosyidi and Darmanto (2020), and Sari et al (2020), it found that the reading ability at Indonesian school is still low.

The cause of the low reading comprehension ability of these students is because they are having problems in some factors. It can be classified into six factors. There are determining main idea, making inference, reference, understanding vocabulary, detail information, factual and negative factual information (Nuttal, 1982) & (Sharpe 2005). The problems will have an impact to the learning process. It will continue to drag on and make the students won't be able to comprehend the context of the text they read. Then, English will be only learned just for the demands of the curriculum so it will be useless for students to study English. Therefore, in order to get information, ideas and knowledge easily, and come to the conclusion that English is worthy to be learned, students must have a good reading ability in reading.

Referring to the discussion above, One of the four fundamental abilities for learning a foreign language is reading, and it plays an essential role in the language learning process. Despite the significant attention given to reading skills in EFL classrooms, many students still struggle with reading comprehension. This issue is prevalent among EFL students in Indonesia, including those in SMA Pembangunan Padang, one of the high schools in Padang City that has integrated English as a compulsory subject in their curriculum. However, the school's academic record shows that many students fail to reach the standard reading ability required for their level. The reasons for this problem are multifaceted and may relate to various factors such as students' motivation, teaching methods, learning materials, and assessment practices.

Therefore, there is a need to analyze the reading ability of EFL students at SMA Pembangunan Padang to find the factors that contribute to the problem. This study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of EFL students' reading ability at SMA Pembangunan Padang, including their strengths, weaknesses, and challenges in developing their reading skills. The findings of this study can help teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers to increase the effectiveness of EFL teaching and learning in Indonesia.

METHOD

1. Research Design

This research is the descriptive research. This research attempt to extract information about the present condition of a phenomena from the data collected. This research discussed about the students' reading abilities, reading problems and the cause of reading problems.

2. Population and Sample

The population of this research was 12th grade of natural science students at SMA Pembangunan Padang, with a number is 92 students. The sample was taken through proportional random sampling technique. The number of the sample was 30 students.

3. Instrumentation

The instruments of this research were reading test and interview. Reading test is used to measure students' ability in reading English text. The interview is used to reveal the cause of reading problems encountered by students when reading English text. The instrument was validated by Dr. Kurnia Ningsih, M.A. lectures from the English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang.

4. Technique of Data Collection

To gain data of the reading ability, the researcher asked the respondents free time and participated the reading test. The respondents were gathered in one room and did the test for 60 minutes.

To gain data of the causes of reading problems, the researcher did the interview session. The interview did individually in one room and recorded by using mobile phone.

5. Techniques of Data Analysis

To analyze the data from reading test, first, the researcher calculated the reading score by using Brown reading score (2004) based on the result of students reading test. Then, to find the students' reading ability, the reading score was interpreted by using Brown categorization of reading ability.

To analyze the data from the interview, first, the researcher transcribed the interviews word-for-word manually, then read through the transcripts and identify the key themes or patterns in the data, and use different codes for each theme. Then, group similar codes into categories to organize the data and make it easier to analyze. Then, analyze the data within each category by looking for patterns, trends, and commonalities that emerge across the interviews. Last, draw conclusions from the patterns and trends that have been identified.

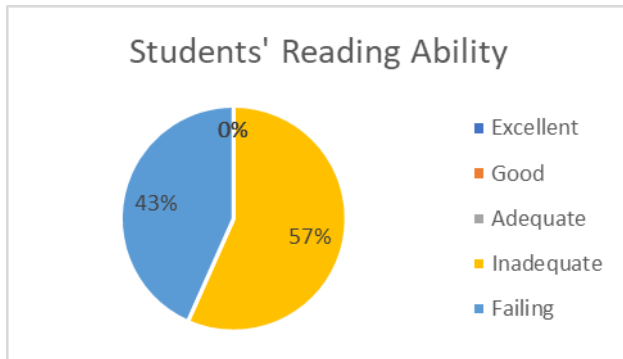
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Students' reading ability and reading problems

The researcher categorized the students' reading score by using Students' Reading Categorization (Brown, 2004). In this categorization, the criteria are divided into excellent, good, adequate, inadequate, failing.

Based on the reading test, the students' reading ability were in category inadequate (17 students or 57%) and in category failing (13 students or 43%).

Figure 1. Students' Reading Ability



The result of the reading test also showed that they had problems with determining main idea, making inference, reference, understanding vocabulary, detail information, factual and negative factual information. It can be seen from the amount of correct answer of each reading component as below:

Table 2. Students' Reading Score

Respondent	STUDENTS' READING SCORE						
	Main idea (6)	Understanding vocabulary (7)	Making inference (7)	Detail information (7)	Reference (7)	Factual and Negative factual (6)	Students score
R1	1	0	1	0	1	1	4
R2	0	0	1	0	0	2	3
R3	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
R4	2	0	1	0	0	0	3
R5	1	0	1	0	0	1	3
R6	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
R7	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
R8	2	0	1	0	1	0	4
R9	0	0	1	3	1	0	5
R10	1	1	0	0	0	1	3
R11	0	1	2	0	2	0	5
R12	1	2	1	2	2	3	11
R13	1	1	1	3	1	4	11
R14	0	2	2	2	1	3	10
R15	2	0	1	1	2	5	11
R16	1	1	0	2	5	3	12
R17	0	2	1	2	1	3	9
R18	1	2	1	2	0	1	7
R19	3	0	3	3	0	1	10
R20	2	2	1	1	3	2	11
R21	0	0	2	3	3	2	10
R22	4	1	0	3	3	1	12
R23	0	0	1	2	4	1	8
R24	3	0	2	3	3	0	11
R25	0	1	0	0	5	5	11
R26	3	1	1	2	4	0	11
R27	0	2	2	1	1	4	10
R28	3	3	3	1	0	1	11
R29	2	0	4	3	3	1	13
R30	2	2	2	1	3	1	11

This table showed that majority of them experienced problem in understanding vocabulary, followed by making inference, detail information, determining main idea, reference, and factual and negative factual. Relatively, many of them indicated the vocabulary factor as their main difficulty when compared with other aspects. However, overall there was no difference between the factors that caused the students' reading problem.

2. The causes of students’ reading problem

The researcher interviewed the respondents to find the causes of their problems in reading. The result of the interview was displayed in the table below.

Table 4.2. Students’ reading problem

Reading Problems	Cause of Reading Problem
Unable to determine main idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The location of main idea - Long text - Having trouble in differentiating the main idea from the supporting details
Not understanding vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The vocabulary limitation - The teacher does not teach new vocabulary specifically - Less interest in memorizing new vocabulary
Unable to making inference,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having trouble in understanding the content of the text and can't figure it out the conclusion of the text - Teacher’s explanation is not clear enough
Unable to find the detail information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having trouble in understanding implied information
Unable to finding reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Don't understand pronouns - Hard to determine the information referred to in a pronoun
Unable to differentiate factual and negative factual information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having trouble in determine which statement is true/false

The result of the interview showed that the factors that causes their reading problems are literal comprehension (trouble in identifying the main idea from a long text and the location of main idea, trouble in differentiating the main idea from the supporting details), inferential comprehension (trouble in understanding the content of the text and figure the conclusion of the text), vocabulary knowledge (vocabulary limitation, don't understand pronouns), critical thinking (trouble in understanding implied information, hard to determine the information referred to in a pronoun, trouble in determine which statement is true or false), and classroom environment that dealt with quality of teaching (teacher doesn’t teach new vocabulary specifically and unclear explanation to help them able to make the inference).

Discussion

The ability of 12th grade natural science students at SMA Pembangunan Padang and the problems they are faced in reading English text. All of them were in low level in which 17 students were in category inadequate and 13 students category failing. Majority of them experienced problem in understanding vocabulary, followed by making inference, detail information, determining main idea, reference, and factual and negative factual. This outcome is comparable to Ancheta's (2018) explanation that it is challenging for non-native students to read and comprehend

English text. While, Nuttal (1982) and Sharpe (2005) stated that there are six components of reading comprehension that students need to fully understand a text well, such as determining main idea, making inference, reference, understanding vocabulary, detail information, factual and negative factual information. These aspects are regarded as problems that the students encounter in comprehending the text. The researcher found understanding vocabulary is the most difficulties experienced by the student. This certainly disrupts other factors, because the main key to comprehending is understanding what the meaning or intent of the text is read. If the student doesn't catch the meaning of the text that they are read, then of course this makes students find it difficult to answer the existing questions.

Referring to the National Reading Panel (2000), the International Reading Association (2010), and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2005) that explain the specific factors that contribute to cause of reading problems may vary depending on individual circumstances, they are including lack of phonemic awareness, limited vocabulary knowledge, insufficient reading practice, poor reading instruction, learning disabilities, lack of motivation, limited access to reading materials.

Related to limited vocabulary knowledge, many students admit that they find it difficult to comprehend the text since they have a limited vocabulary knowledge. This result is similar to the theories that explains Individuals with limited vocabulary knowledge may have difficulty understanding what they read (The National Reading Panel, 2000; the International Reading Association, 2010; the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2005).

Related to insufficient reading practice, the inability of students to determine the location of the main idea, differentiating the main idea from the supporting details, understanding the content of the text and can't figure it out the conclusion of the text, understanding implied information, determine the information referred to in a pronoun, and determine which statement is true/false indicates that students rarely train themselves to read. This result is supported by the theories that explains individuals who do not engage in regular reading practice may have difficulty with fluency and comprehension (The National Reading Panel, 2000; the International Reading Association, 2010; the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2005).

Related to poor reading instruction, many students admit that the teacher's explanation is not clear enough to help them understand to making conclusion of a text. Also the teacher does not teach new vocabulary specifically. This result is similar to what the National Reading Panel (2000), the International Reading Association (2010), and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2005) stated that teachers who do not provide systematic and explicit instruction in phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies may leave students with significant gaps in their reading skills.

Related to lack of motivation, less interest in memorizing new vocabulary indicates a lack of motivation for students to learn English. If students struggle to understand the vocabulary in the text then students tend to be lazy to read because the students do not understand the text. This result is also congruent with The National Reading Panel, (2000), the International Reading Association (2010), and

the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2005) that explains individuals who lack motivation and interest in reading may not interact the text in a meaningful way, leading to limited comprehension and poor reading skills.

However, this research only used the Brown Reading Score to measure the students' reading ability. It is significant to mention that the Brown Reading Score is just one measure of reading ability, and it may not capture all aspects of reading comprehension, such as critical thinking, analysis, and synthesis. Therefore, it is recommended to use the Brown Reading Score in conjunction with other measures of reading ability, such as the comprehension questions in the reading test or other standardized reading assessments. This can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the students' reading ability and can help to answer the research question more effectively. Additionally, it may be useful to include qualitative data, such as students' self-reflections or feedback on their reading experience, to provide a more nuanced understanding of their reading ability and to identify specific areas for improvement. Consequently, this research suggests a further study dealing with students' ability in reading with more widely scope and tool of measurement.

CONCLUSION

The result of this study showed that the 12th grade students of natural science at SMA Pembangunan Padang were in category failing (43%) and inadequate (57%). It showed that the students' ability in reading were in low level. This result indicated that they had problems in reading English text. The reading problems were shown by their inability in determining main idea (79%), not understand vocabulary (89%), unable to making inference (83%), unable to find the detail information (81%), unable to finding reference (75%), and unable to differentiate the factual and negative factual information (74%). Then, the cause of their reading problem are lack of vocabulary knowledge, the complexity of the sentence structure and grammar when trying to find the detail information, difficulty in identifying the main idea and making inference within the text, and struggle with reference and factual and negative factual based on the information presented.

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