



An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Making Inferences at English Department Universitas Negeri Padang

Heri Wahyudi¹, Yetty Zainil²

English Department, Faculty of Language and Art, Universitas Negeri Padang¹

Correspondence Email : heriwaahyudi@gmail.com

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Abstract

Making inferences is an essential component of reading. Besides that, when the text asks the reader to know the facts behind it, the inference must be considered when reading. Inference becomes an important part of reading to be fluent. It is one of the key components to become fluent in reading. English language education students usually learn and apply inference when they are in advanced reading classes; they will learn a lot about it and make inferences from given text. However, when the researcher was in the class, he noticed that a few other students complained because they felt difficult when making inferences from the text. Some researchers have examined case studies about inference. However, prior research on comprehension of reading texts focused more on making inferences and inference strategies. This study aims to find out students' difficulties in making inferences at English Language Education Universitas Negeri Padang. The researcher employs a descriptive quantitative research design that integrates quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This research involved 30 students of English Language Education at Universitas Negeri Padang from K4-2019. The random sampling was implemented in this research. The results showed that comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words, having the highest percentage at 63.3%, then recognizing the author's bias at 60%, understanding the author's point of view at 56.6%, and making a conclusion from the facts in the text at 50%. The results indicate that almost all sixth-semester students at English Language Education Universitas Negeri Padang have difficulty in making inferences.

Keywords:

Inferences,
Students'
Difficulties,
Reading Skill

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INTRODUCTION

Reading allows us to see the world from a different perspective. Reading books, magazines, newspapers, etc allows people to gain more knowledge and information. We get so much information from the texts we read; when discussing reading, we always discuss a text. According to Nunan (2003), reading combines information from a text with the reader's background to create meaning. Readers assign meaning to

written symbols when they look at a text, according to Aebersold and Field (1997). It will enable us to get information from the Internet, books, and school lessons. People need to get more information from any source to improve their knowledge.

Inference is a part of the cognitive process in reading. Inferences are conclusions drawn from knowledge or assumptions already known. In addition, deriving inferred conclusion is also referred to as inference. Inference occurs when the reader has to perform the process to find out the meaning of the author that not include in the text. Then, the reader has to understand the information referred to by the author and make a conclusion. The inference is used to obtain the implicit textual information. Interpreting the information conveyed in a language ensures access to implicit information openly. The interpreting process allows the reader to build meaning based on their past understanding of the information. The capacity to make inferences is an essential or necessary talent for interpreting the author's meaning and displaying analysis (Marzano, 2010).

Making inferences is an essential component of reading. Besides that, when the text asks the reader to know the facts behind it, the inference must be considered when reading. Inference becomes an important part of reading to be fluent. It is one of the key components to become fluent in reading. English language education students usually learn and apply inference when they are in advanced reading classes; they will learn a lot about it and make inferences from given text. However, when the researcher was in the class, he noticed that a few other students complained because they felt difficult when making inferences from the text. Some researchers have examined case studies about inference. However, prior research on comprehension of reading texts focused more on making inferences and inference strategies.

In contrast, difficulties in making inferences still need to be improved when choosing a research topic. Therefore, the researcher is interested in raising student difficulties in making inferences as a study topic. The researcher chose sixth-semester English Language Education students at Universitas Negeri Padang because they had completed three levels of college reading courses. The researcher will examine what difficulties students face when making inferences which is useful to study.

Some research has been done related to inference. First, A study was conducted by Cain, K., Oakhill, J.V., Barnes, M.A., and Bryant, P.E. in 2001. The researchers employed a method that accounted for variances in personal knowledge to explore the correlation between the cognitive ability of young children and their capacity for drawing inferences. Second, The study was conducted by Baretta, L., Tomitch, L.L.B., MacNair, N., Lim, V.K., and Waldie, E. in 2009. They explored the inference process produced by native English speakers while reading two different text forms in this study. Third, Attaprechakul (2013) conducted the study. The study investigated the inference strategies that are essential for effectively comprehending journal articles. Fourth, In 2013, Arianti researched the importance and effectiveness of the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) approach in teaching inference skills for narrative texts. This comprehension approach instructs students on questioning a book, making predictions, and reading to support or contradict their predictions.

Based on previous theories and researchers from various areas did studies, the researcher assumes that it is beneficial to conduct a similar study related to inference difficulties. The researcher will conduct further research in this study to determine students' difficulties in making inferences. Therefore, a study *entitled An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Making Inferences at English Department Universitas Negeri Padang* is needed to be conducted to find out further information about students' difficulties in making inferences.

METHOD

The researcher employs a descriptive quantitative research design that integrates quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The researcher will employ a reading test to conduct quantitative research. The researcher intends to employ a questionnaire as a tool for conducting qualitative research.

Daniel (2004) suggests that population refers to a broad group of people. According to Creswell's (2012) definition, a population refers to a collection of individuals who exhibit similar behavior patterns. As a result, the population consists of items and persons with a specific amount and behavior that the researcher specified to analyze and draw conclusions. The researcher aims to study sixth-semester students at the English Language Education Universitas Negeri Padang, which consists of 164 students. The research will use a cluster random sampling technique. Cluster sampling is characterized by clustering and arranging the population into a series of subsidiary sections or clusters from which the general sample is randomly selected for participation in the study (Kothari, 2004). According to Arikunto (2010), it is preferable to accept all if the population is less than 100. Then, it can be taken for 10 to 15%, 20 to 25%, or even more if the number of subjects exceeds 100.

The researcher's instrument is the tool the researcher uses to gather data. Because research is mostly about measuring, reliable measuring equipment is required. The present study will employ the following instrument:

1. Test

The researcher administers the reading test to assess the student's ability to make inferences while reading. The researcher administered a reading assessment to determine the student's proficiency in test-taking. The present study examined thirteen distinct types of inference questions related to the literary work 'When Kids Can't Read, What Teachers Can Do' by Kylee Beers. According to Harris in Hermina (2000), multiple-choice form items tend to have superior reliability as the most useful of all objective types since they can be administered. Based on the opinion above, the reading test given will be in the form of multiple-choice types.

Table 3. Reading Test Blueprints

No	Inference Types	Indicator	No. Item
1.	Identifying the pronoun of the antecedent.	Identify pronouns that indicate information about the subject in question	2, 6, 34
2.	Using context clues to find unknown words ' meanings.	Recognize the surrounding context close to a particular word or phrase and provide an explicit or implicit indication regarding its interpretation.	7, 14, 20
3.	Comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words	Analyze the linguistic structure of the text by breaking down individual words to determine their respective grammatical functions.	5, 9, 28, 39
4.	Identifying the tones of the characters	Students can determine the tone implied from the text	4, 32, 35
5.	Recognizing the characters' personalities and motivation	Students can identify the personality and motivation of the character	8, 29, 36
6.	Comprehending the relationship between the character	Identify the nature of a relationship from the text	13, 27, 37
7.	Providing the details of setting	Students can conclude placement in the text	21, 30, 38

8.	Setting up events and ideas explanation of the text.	Students can imply information about the main idea from the text	11, 15, 26
9.	Proposing the detail of explanation from text event.	Students can make their conclusions about events in the text	1, 16, 18
10	Understanding the point of view of the author	Identify the opinion of the author from the passage	3, 17, 24
11.	Knowing the bias of the author	Students can identify the author's bias in the passage	10, 19, 31
12.	Connecting the event in their lives with the text	Students can answer questions that are related to moral value	22, 33, 40
13.	Making a conclusion from the facts in the text.	Students can gather all the information that the author has given them through the text	12, 23, 25

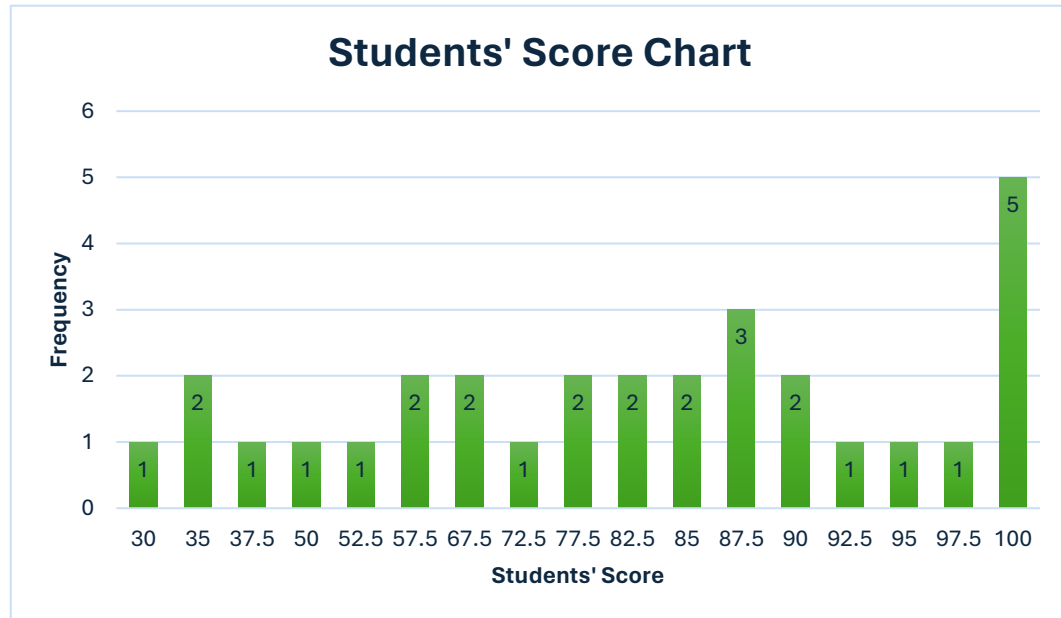
(adapted from Kyleene Beers' book, 'When Kids Can't Read, What Teachers Can Do.)

2. Questionnaire

Using a questionnaire as a data collection method involves distributing a sequence of questions to obtain information regarding the difficulties encountered by sixth-semester students taking English Language Education at Universitas Negeri Padang in making inferences. These questions are relevant to thirteen distinct forms of inference found in the literary work titled 'When Kids Can't Read, What Teachers Can Do' by Kyleene Beers. In this study, the researcher uses a closed-form questionnaire. Closed-form questionnaires will help the respondent to answer quickly because the researcher gives an alternative answer to them.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding (tentative)



Graphic 1. Data Frequency Distribution Students' Score

Figure 1 shows the data frequency distribution of students' scores from the Reading test. Based on the data above, it can be said that students' score was quite good. The data results found out that the mean score is 76. Eleven students get scores between 30 and 72.5. It can be said that they are at a low level of the average score or Mean of the data. In contrast, nineteen of the students get scores above the average score. For more detail, each of the students score and the frequency can be seen on the chart above.

Table 4.1 Students' Test Error

No	Types of Inferences	Number of Questions	Percentage
1.	Identifying the pronoun of the antecedent.	2, 6, 34	10%
2.	Using context clues to find	7, 14, 20	30%

	unknown words ‘ meanings.		
3.	Comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words	5, 9, 28, 39	63.3%
4.	Identifying the tones of the characters	4, 32, 35	43.3%
5.	Recognizing the characters' personalities and motivation	8, 29, 36	46.6%
6.	Comprehending the relationship between the character	13, 27, 37	26.6%
7.	Providing the details of setting	21, 30, 38	13.3%
8.	Setting up events and ideas explanation of the text.	11, 15, 26	33.3%
9.	Proposing the detail of explanation from text event.	1, 16, 18	40%
10.	Understanding the author's point of view	3, 17, 24	56.6%

11.	Knowing the bias of the author	10, 19, 31	60%
12.	Connecting the event in their lives with the text	22, 33, 40	36.6%
13.	Making a conclusion from the facts in the text.	12, 23, 25	50%

It can be seen in the column above, comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words, having the highest percentage at 63.3%, then recognizing the author's bias at 60%, understanding the author's point of view at 56.6%, and making a conclusion from the facts in the text at 50%.

After calculating the test results, the researcher also distributed questionnaires to 30 respondents to gain further information about students' difficulties when making inferences about the reading texts from the tests. The researcher used a closed-form questionnaire and provided thirteen statements related to the type of inference. The researcher selected a sample of ten respondents who scored highest and ten who scored lowest, totaling 20 representatives, to provide a more detailed explanation of the challenges faced by students in English Language Education at Universitas Negeri Padang when making inferences from test materials. This explanation aims to show the difficulties that both of them (ten respondents who scored highest and ten respondents who scored lowest) face and show that the difficulties faced by English Language Education Universitas Negeri Padang students when making inferences affect the results of their answers on the test.

The following is the result of the questionnaire that the respondents have filled in:

Table 4.2 Respondents With The Highest Score

Respondent	Reading Test Scores	Results of Questionnaire Filling (Types of Inference Difficulty)
Respondent 1	100	comprehending the role of grammatical

		in unknown words, setting up events and ideas explanation of the text, knowing the bias of the author.
Respondent 2	100	using context clues to find unknown words ' meanings., identifying the tones of the characters, proposing the detail of explanation from text event.
Respondent 3	100	comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words, identifying the tones of the characters, providing the details of setting, understanding the author's point of view.
Respondent 4	100	recognizing the characters' personalities and motivation, knowing the author's bias , making a conclusion from the facts in the text.
Respondent 5	100	comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words, knowing the bias of the author, making a conclusion from the facts in the text.
Respondent 6	97.5	understanding the author's point of view, knowing the bias of the author
Respondent 7	95	using context clues to find unknown words ' meanings, identifying the tones of the characters, knowing the bias of the author
Respondent 8	92.5	comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words, identifying the tones of the characters, understanding the author's point of view.

Respondent 9	90	comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words, identifying the tones of the characters, propossing the detail of explanation from text event.
Respondent 10	90	comprehending the relationship between the character, propossing the detail of explanation from text event, connecting the event in their lives with the text.

From the column above, the results of the ten respondents with the highest score indicate difficulties they face despite getting good grades. These results suggest that the most choice is comprehending the role of grammatical of unknown words, identifying the characters' tones, understanding the author's point of view, knowing the author's bias, and making a conclusion based on the facts from the text.

Table 4.3 Respondents With The Lowest Score

Respondent	Score	Results of Questionnaire Filling (Inference Type)
Respondent 1	30	Comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words, identifying the tones of the characters, recognizing the characters' personalities and motivation, providing the details of setting.
Respondent 2	35	comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words, identifying the tones of the characters, setting up events and ideas explanation of the text, propossing the detail of explanation from text event,

		understanding the author's point of view, knowing the bias of the author, and making a conclusion from the facts in the text.
Respondent 3	35	identifying the pronoun of the antecedent, understanding the author's point of view, knowing the bias of the author, making a conclusion from the facts in the text.
Respondent 4	37.5	identifying the tones of the characters, recognizing the characters' personalities and motivation, proposing the detail of explanation from text event, understanding the author's point of view, knowing the bias of the author, making a conclusion from the facts in the text.
Respondent 5	50	identifying the pronoun of the antecedent., using context clues to find unknown words ' meanings, comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words, setting up events and ideas explanation of the text, knowing the bias of the author, making a conclusion from the facts in the text.
Respondent 6	52.5	comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words, identifying the tones of the characters, understanding the author's point of view, knowing the bias of the author, making a conclusion

		from the facts in the text.
Respondent 7	57.5	comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words, , identifying the tones of the characters, recognizing the characters' personalities and motivation, knowing the bias of the author, making a conclusion from the facts in the text.
Respondent 8	57.5	using context clues to find unknown words ' meanings, identifying the tones of the characters, comprehending the relationship between the character, setting up events and ideas explanation of the text., connecting the event in their lives with the text, making a conclusion from the facts in the text.
Respondent 9	67.5	comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words, identifying the tones of the characters, comprehending the relationship between the character, understanding the author's point of view, knowing the author's bias.
Respondent 10	67.5	using context clues to find unknown words ' meanings, comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words, recognizing the characters' personalities and motivation, comprehending the relationship between the character, recognizing the author's bias.

It can be seen from table above that the ten respondents who have the lowest scores have more difficulty in making inferences. From the results above, it can be concluded that respondents who have the highest and lowest scores both have dominant problems in comprehending the role of grammatical of unknown words, identifying the characters' tones, understanding the author's point of view, knowing the author's bias, and making a conclusion based on the facts from the text.

The questionnaire results that have been filled out by 30 respondents and have been calculated by the researcher to support the results of the tests described:

Table 4.4 The Interval

Maximum Score	$30 \times 5 = 150$
Minimum Score	$30 \times 1 = 30$
Interval	$100 : 5 = 20$

The interpretation score has criteria built upon intervals from the lowest range of 0% to the highest 100%.

Table 4.5 The Score Interpretation

Percentage	Description
80 – 100%	Strongly Agree
60 - 79,99%	Agree
40 - 59,99%	Neutral
20 - 39,99%	Disagree
0 - 19,99%	Strongly Disagree

Table 4.6 The Result of The Students' Questionnaire

Type of Inferences	Total Score of Each Inference Type	Percentage	Description
Identifying the pronoun of the antecedent.	87	58%	Neutral
Using context clues to find unknown words ' meanings.	83	55.3%	Neutral
Comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words	119	79.3%	Agree
Identifying the tones of the characters	93	62%	Agree
Recognizing the characters' personalities and motivation	95	63.3%	Agree
Comprehending the relationship between the character	80	53.3%	Neutral

Providing the details of setting	76	50.6%	Neutral
Setting up events and ideas explanation of the text.	81	54%	Neutral
Proposing the detail of explanation from text event.	83	55.3%	Neutral
Understanding the author's point of view	101	67.3%	Agree
Knowing the bias of the author	104	69.3%	Agree
Connecting the event in their lives with the text	75	50%	Neutral
Making a conclusion from the facts in the text.	97	64.6%	Agree

From the interpretation of the score in the above table, the calculations carried out by researchers on the results of filling out the questionnaire which 30 respondents filled in showed that there were six types of inference in the agreed category, there are comprehending the grammatical role of unknown words as much as 79.3%, knowing the bias of the author as much as 69.3%, understanding the point of view of the author 67.3%, making a conclusion based on the facts from the text 64.6%, recognizing the characters' personalities and motivation 63.3%, and identifying the characters' tones 62%.

Discussion

The research results in this study indicate that almost all sixth-semester students at English Language Education Universitas Negeri Padang have difficulty in making inferences. Students face six difficulties in making inferences. A huge difficulty for students is the lack of grammatical roles of unknown word as the first type with the highest percentage. From the researcher's point of view, grammar is essential. The structure of a text can facilitate comprehension by accurately conveying the writer's intended meaning to the reader.

The second difficulty faced is recognizing the author's bias. From the researcher's point of view, identifying an author's bias is important for students to know and learn because bias is a tendency or prejudice that supports or opposes someone or something. A person must be aware of his biases because everyone has biases (Institute, 2013). Therefore, it is also crucial for students to know the bias that the author may carry out.

Students' third difficulty is understanding the point of view of the author. The point of view is essential to recognize when detecting the goals of the author and prejudices because the author's goals and biases are sometimes explicit, subtle, and hidden. So we sometimes make mistakes in absorbing the perception or what the author intended.

The fourth difficulty relates to the construction of conclusions based on the facts in the text. The conclusion construct uses implied or inferred information to make meaning from what is not clearly stated (Beers, 2003). It means the researcher wants students to collect all the information the writer gives them through the text.

The fifth difficulty relates to identify personality, character, and motivation. Many types of character motivation affect the personality of individual characters: necessity, security and safety, belonging and affection, achievement and pride, and self actualization (Maslow, 1987). Therefore, in the researcher's opinion, it is important to study inference more deeply to identify each character's personality, character, and motivation in the story. This finding aligns with Wardinah (2016), who also found the same result in making inferences of this type.

Recognizing the character's tone is the sixth difficulty. As per whwn 's publication, a writer's tone refers to their attitude towards a particular subject. The tone identification can be achieved by analyzing the lexical selection and phrasing. For this type, the result of this study agreed with Attaprechakul (2013), who said that the subjects failed to analyze the writers' tone.

Cain et al. (2001) conducted an initial investigation to examine the correlation between the inference-making abilities and comprehension skills of young children. The study employed a methodology that regulated the participants' general knowledge variations. The children were exposed to a multi-episode narrative, facilitating their capacity to generate two distinct forms of inference: coherence and elaborative inferences. Despite the gap between the research's subject and object, the researcher utilized this study to acquire a deeper understanding of inference and look into

associated literature that may serve as a reference point. Attaprechakul's (2013) second study, which investigated the inference strategies required for successful comprehension of journal articles, was utilized by the researcher to supplement their references, despite the limited number of studies of similar nature.

Furthermore, compared to the previous study by Wardinah (2016), the researcher's study and Wardinah's have the same topic about difficulties in making inferences, but the previous researcher only researched using four types of inference, while the researcher used thirteen types of inference. From this, it can be seen that this study has an advantage because the researcher used thirteen types of inference and focused on finding specific difficulties.

CONCLUSION

This research was proposed to answer students' difficulties in making inferences. This study used descriptive quantitative study to describe the data that obtained from the reading test and questionnaire. The data that obtained from reading test and questionnaire calculated manually.

The data from reading test results showed that students experienced some difficulties in making inferences. Comprehending the role of grammatical in unknown words is the highest difficulty at 63.3%, then recognizing the author's bias at 60%, understanding the author's point of view at 56.6%, making a conclusion from the facts in the text at 50%, recognizing the characters' personalities and motivation at 46.6% and identifying the tones of the characters at 43.3%.

Moreover, the questionnaire results are in line with reading test results. The results showed comprehending the grammatical role of unknown words as much as 79.3%, knowing the bias of the author as much as 69.3%, understanding the point of view of the author 67.3%, making a conclusion based on the facts from the text 64.6%, recognizing the characters' personalities and motivation 63.3%, and identifying the characters' tones 62%.

In conclusion, the sixth-semester students at English Language Education Universitas Negeri Padang had six difficulties from the thirteen types of inferences. The difficulties include comprehending the grammatical role of unknown words, knowing the bias of the author, recognizing the characters' personalities and motivations, making a conclusion based on the facts from the text, understanding the point of view of the author, and identifying the characters' tones.

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