

THE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS' ABILITY IN MASTERING READING TEXT OF MUHAMMADIYAH ACEH UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The aim of this study is at examining how well the students' ability in mastering the text and the main idea, and how they could improve their ability in understanding the text especially to find out the main idea from the text. The object of this study was 10 students from semester I in Intensive Reading Comprehension class. The data was obtained from the result of students' worksheets and questionnaires distribution. In finding out the result, The data was analyzed by using descriptive qualitative. The result shows that the students' ability in mastering reading text was categorized in poor level of understanding main idea. Besides, the result of questionnaire indicated that the main problem in reading lesson is that the methods used and the class situation. Therefore, the students do self motivation to enrich and memorize new vocabularies as an effort in improving their reading understanding. The implication of this study is to give the input to the lecturer of Reading subject to apply the appropriate method and technique, and create a nice class environment.

Keywords: Intensive Reading Comprehension, Reading Text, Ability

INTRODUCTION

As a language skill, reading can be considered as crucial aspect of one of language ability because it deals with the information and communication. Pang, Muaka, Bernhardt, & Kamil (2003) clarify that reading has an important educational goal. The ability to read provide the opportunity in gaining new knowledge, enjoy literature, and do everyday things that are part of human life. So, the first thing that has to know before learning reading is what reading itself.

Reading is defined as a cognitive process that involves decoding symbols to arrive at meaning. Although the reasons for reading may vary, the primary purpose of reading is to understand the text. Reading is a thinking process. It allows the reader to use what he or she may already know, also called prior knowledge. As mentioned by Tarigan (2008) that reading is a recording and decoding process. Decoding is connecting the written word to oral language meaning which covers the changing of written form into the sound meaning.

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Patel and Jain (2008: 113 – 114) states as follows: “Reading is an important activity in life with which one can update his/her knowledge. Reading skill is an important tool for academic success. Reading is the most important activity in any language class. Reading is not only a source of information and a pleasurable activity but also as a means of consolidating and extending one’s knowledge of the language. Reading is very necessary to widen the mind, again and understanding of the foreign culture”.

According to Prastisi (2009), reading is a difficult and complex thing that covers many things, not only sounding the written form but also activating the visual, thought, psicolingusitics and metacognitive. As the visual process, reading is a kind of symbols interpreting process into oral contents. Reading is a process of extracting meanings from the written language. It is a process of interpreting a message. It is an important skill in language teaching. It is a process of communication involving the writer and the reader, the encoder and the decoder.

Reading comprehension is one of the major targets in learning English. According to Cahyono (2011) in Muslimaini (2017) “reading comprehension is a process of getting information from context and combining. It is a process of using reader’s existing knowledge (schemata) to interpret text in order to construct Meaning”. Reading comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and construcyng meaning through interaction and involmment with written language. It consists of three elements : the reader, the text, and the activity or purpose for reading. Reading comprehension refers to the students’ ability to understand the reading text given. It is the act of linking one idea to another. It is the activity to read, that has a purpose to get information from the reading material. It means that reading is an activity that aims primarily at understanding or constructing meaning from the written forms. Furthermore, in reading activities, students should have good reading comprehension to get the information from the text.

Compared to the traditional view of reading under which a reader simply draws information from the material, the current view describes a reader as an active one - extracting information from more than one text and then synthesizing and making a representation of the text’s message (McKeown, Beck, Sinatra, & Loxterman, 1992). The important skill in comprehension is grasping the main idea from reading a paragraph, a report, an article or a story. The purpose in such reading is to find out essential meaning, the central theme, or general information of the material. The information may be feeling or emotion expressed.

In university level, the reading ability or competence will be taught in reading comprehension class. Reading comprehension is the ability to understand information in a text and interpret it appropriately what is meant by the text (Grabe and Stoller, 2019). It means that reading comprehension is the ability to read text, process and understand its meaning.

Reading is an activity that to understand what someone reads. Anderson (in Tarigan, 2008: 9-11), there are various aims of reading. They are:

- a. Reading for details or facts.
- b. Reading for main ideas.
- c. Reading for sequence or organization.
- d. Reading for inference.
- e. Reading to classify.
- f. Reading to evaluate.

Furthermore, Grabe and Stoller (2019: 6-10) propose some purposes of reading more detail as follows:

- 1) Reading to search for simple information and reading to skim quickly In reading to search, readers typically scan the text for a specific word, or specific piece of information, or a few representative phrases. In this reading purpose, readers try to get spesific information in the text. Usually, the questions that need this kind of reading are the items about names, years and references.
- 2) Reading to learn from texts typically occurs in academic and professional contexts in which a person needs to learn a considerable amount of information from a text. For example, a biology who teacher reads a book that written in English entitled 'Amoeba' needs to learn detail information in the book. He/ she want to improve their knowledge about that topic. Another example, is when a doctor wants to get the knowledge from an English book, so he or she should encourage himself or herself to learn more about he specific things in the book. This kind of reading purpose, needs more effort to do so.
- 3) Reading to integrate information, write and critique texts Reading to integrate information often occurs before a writer writes a paper. In a paper, he/she needs to integrate much information that will support his/her statements, her ideas, or against someone statements. The information is taken from many sources. Then, he/she

decides what information to integrate and how to integrate it his/her writing. In addition to this, the writer needs to gain as much as information to support his or her ideas.

- 4) Reading for general comprehension Comprehension is the most basic purpose of reading. Getting to know a content of a book, previewing a book, are included in reading for general understanding. This purpose also occurs when reading a book for pleasure. Reading for pleasure rarely aims for searching specific information from the text. People mostly enjoy reading for comprehending the text. From the discussion above, it can be concluded that there are two essential of focus on reading, they are reading for getting information and reading for getting pleasure. In addition, there are some spesific purposes of reading; reading to search for simple information, reading to learn from texts, reading to integrate information, write and critique texts, reading for general comprehension. Therefore, deciding the purpose of reading before reading a text is important because it influences our goals.

In doing any aim of this reading comprehension, Lee (2017) in Laily, R,N (2018) stated that there are 6 skills considered essentials to be mastered enough by the students (readers), they are:

- 1). Decoding

Decoding is related to an early language skill called phonemic awareness which is part of a broader skill called phonological awareness. Phonemic awareness enables kids to hear individual sounds in words (phonemes). It also allows them to “play” with sounds at the word and syllable level.

- 2). Fluency

To read fluently, students need to instantly recognize word. Fluency speeds up when they can read and understand text. It is also important when students find irregular words, like of and the, which cannot be sounded out.

- 3). Vocabulary

To understand what stated in text, people need to understand most of the words in the text. Having a strong vocabulary is a key component of reading comprehension. Students can learn vocabulary through instruction but they typically learn the meaning of words through everyday experience and also by reading.

- 4). Sentence Construction and Cohesion

Understanding how sentences are built might seem like a writing skill. Connecting ideas within and between sentences, is called cohesion. But these skills are important for reading comprehension as well. Knowing how ideas link up at the sentence level helps students get meaning from passages and entire texts. It also leads to something called coherence, or the ability to connect ideas to other ideas in an overall piece of writing.

5). Reasoning and Background Knowledge

Most readers relate what they read to what they know. So it is important for students to have background or prior knowledge about the world when they read. They also need to be able to “read between the lines” and extract meaning even when it is not literally written.

6). Working Memory and Attention

These two skills are both part of a group of abilities known as executive function. They are different but closely related. When kids read, attention allows them to take in information from the text. Working memory allows them to hold on to that information and use it to gain meaning and build knowledge from what they read. Working memory and attention are part of executive function. The ability to self-monitor while reading is also tied to that. Kids need to be able to recognize when they do not understand something. Then they need to stop, go back and re-read to clear up any confusion they may have.

After having background of the purposes of reading, and the things should be covered to reach the aim of reading, we need to clarify some types of reading. According to Patel and Jain (2008: 117-123) the types of reading are:

1). Intensive Reading

Intensive reading is related to further in language learning under the teacher’s guidance. Intensive reading will provide a basic for explaining difficulties of structure and for extending knowledge of vocabulary and idioms. Intensive reading material will be the basis for classroom activity. It will not only be read but will be discussed in detail in the target language, sometimes analyzed and used as a basis for writing exercises. Intensive reading is text reading or passage reading. In this reading the learner read the text to get knowledge or analysis. The goal of this reading is to read shorted text. This reading is done to carry out to get specific information.

2). Extensive Reading

Extensive reading is used to obtain a general understanding of a subject and includes reading longer texts for pleasure. The reader wants to know about something. The reader

doesn't care about specific or important information after reading. Usually people read for to keep them update.

3). Aloud Reading

Aloud reading is basic form of classroom organization and disciplines. In reading aloud, the students are confronted with written sentences which haven't spoken before. The aim of reading aloud is the achievement or better speaking ability and the pronunciation of the student.

4). Silent Reading

Silent reading is a very important skill in teaching of English. This reading should be employed to increase reading ability among learners. Silent reading is done to acquire a lot of information. Silent reading must be based on student's selected text. Silent reading enables the students to read completely silently without making sounds and moving his lips. It helps him read with speed, ease and fluency. It aids comprehension and expands the student's vocabulary.

To handle the problems that may occur during reading process, Cristiana Yatri Yuliani (2017) mentioned some points that need to be mastered by the students or readers broadly, they are:

- a. The readers have to have well developed vocabularies.
- b. The readers' body action during reading process, be relax.
- c. Concentration.
- d. Review the main things that the readers have already read.
- e. Motivation.

Reading is a great habit that can change human life significantly. There exist some reading techniques, which if mastered at a growing stage can help the reader, be better and more comprehensive readers. Those techniques are:

1. Scanning Technique

Scanning through the text is a reading strategy that is used for getting some specific points by looking at the whole text. For pointing out the important information of a book the readers can skim through the summary or the preface or the beginning and end chapters of that book. For example, this technique is used for looking up a name or a number.

2. Skimming Technique

This reading technique is used for getting main information of the whole text . We generally use this technique at the time of reading a newspaper or magazine. Under this technique, we read quickly to get the main points and skip over the detail.

3. Active Reading Style

Active reading aims to get an in-depth understanding of the text. Under this technique, the reader actively involved with the text while reading it. Getting in-depth knowledge of the text at hand is not possible by reading to skim through or scan through the text.

4. Detailed Reading

This technique is used for extracting information accurately from the whole text. Under this technique, we read every word for understanding the meaning of the text. In this careful reading, we can skim the text first for getting a general idea and then go back to read in detail. We can use a dictionary to find the meaning of every unfamiliar word.

5. Speed Reading

Speed-reading is actually a combination of various reading methods. The aim of speed-reading is basically to increase the reading speed without compromising the understanding of the text reading. Some of the strategies used in speed reading are as follows: Identifying words without focusing on each letter; Not sounding-out all words; Not sub-vocalizing some phrases; Spending less time on some phrases than others; Skimming small sections.

6. Structure Proposition Evaluation

This reading technique is mainly applicable to non-fiction writing. This technique suggests reading as per the three following patterns: Studying the structure of the work; Studying the logical propositions made and organized into chains of inference; Evaluation of the merits of the arguments and conclusions.

7. Survey-Question-Read-Recite-Review

This method aims to facilitate a clear understanding of the text that the reader would be able to teach whatever he has learned during the process of reading.

The process involves five different steps, which are as follows:

a. Survey

The survey involves getting a quick idea of the whole writing piece. For example, reading the introduction or summary of a book will be enough to get an idea of that book.

b. Question

We are not just reading the words or looking at the words but are actually trying to make out the underlying meaning of the text. So we should prepare questions in our mind and look for the answers while reading the text.

c. Read

The reader should read selectively if they are looking for any specific.

d. Recite

The reader should answer the questions in his own words using only the keywords that are required to sum up the complete idea.

e. Review

The reader should review the entire things in his mind.

Reading is the basic foundation on which academic skills of individuals are built. As we know the paramount importance of reading, it is given the top priority in primary education.

From the above explanation about the aims of reading, types of reading and some crucial points that need to be mastered by the students or readers, so that the students have to select the proper things that they have to do or master to comprehend any texts provided as the task in their Intensive Reading Comprehension class. As a result, it can be known how well the students' ability in mastering the text and the main idea, and how they could improve their ability in understanding the text especially to find out the main idea from the text. It means that, the objectives of this study are to find out the students' ability in understanding main idea of reading text.

In conclusion, the reader, the text and the activity are fundamental factors influencing comprehension. In other words, the successful reader does not only need capacities and competencies such as having (high vocabulary knowledge, good word recognition, fluency, superior memory intelligence for remembering, and connecting to the prior knowledge), understand complexities of text features or language features (genre, syntax, sentence structure and vocabulary), but also presents some activities such as (purpose for reading, strategies for reading, motivation for reading, and interest in the content of reading) in enabling to comprehend the message or meaning from a text well .

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a qualitative research. It is a scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data. This type of research refers to the meanings, concepts definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and description of things. The sample of this study was 10 students of semester I from Intensive Reading Comprehension class of English department at Islamic Studies Faculty of Muhammadiyah Aceh University. Sample is a small group that is observed and a population is defined as all members of any well-defined class of people, events or subjects (Arikunto, 2006). To select the sample, those students were taken randomly.

In collecting the data, the documents from students' worksheets and the questionnaire sheets were distributed by the writer to the students. The document helped the writer to gain the data about how well the students' ability in understanding the main ideas. It is the students' worksheets made by the lecturer consisted of ten questions with various subskills in reading, while the questionnaire helped to collect the data about the students' effort in mastering reading text.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The writer did this study at English Department of Muhammadiyah Aceh University. From 10 documents, which taken randomly, it was drawn that there were 10 questions made by the lecturer based on English texts. Derived from it, it can be classified that 4 questions are about main idea, 3 questions are about vocabulary, 1 item is about inference and the last 2 items are about reference. From 10 questions, they are question number 1,5,8 and 10 are about main idea. After that, She distributed the questionnaire sheets to the participants. The questionnaire was in open procedure form. It means that the participants could write down their ideas or answers freely as what in their thoughts. To ease the writer to categorize the students (participants), she labelled them from S1 to S10.

1. The result of worksheet

The data below is the description of students' worksheet.

Table 1. Questions About Main Idea

<i>No</i>	<i>Student (Label)</i>	<i>Question number</i>	<i>Result</i>
1	S1	1,5,8	Incorrect
2	S2	1,5,8	Incorrect
3	S3	-	All correct
4	S4	5,8,10	Incorrect
5	S5	1,5	Incorrect

6	S6	1,5,8,10	All incorrect
7	S7	1,5,8,10	All incorrect
8	S8	-	All correct
9	S9	1,5,10	Incorrect
10	S10	1,5,10	Incorrect

From the table, it shows that there were 2 students who could answer all questions about main idea correctly (namely S3 and S8). While 1 student who could answer 2 numbers of question (it was S5), 5 students could answer only 1 question correctly (they were S1, S2, S4, S9, and S10), and the rest 2 students could not answer all questions (S6 and S7).

Thus, learning about main ideas should be taught consistently. The lecturer needs to train the students by giving the tasks. Besides, the lecturer should inform them about the position of main idea in general in one paragraph and its feature. The main way to improve this subskill in reading is keep practicing and learning.

2. The result of questionnaire

Based on the questionnaire, there were 8 students who answered that they are not really into reading. Likewise, 2 more students quite like the reading subject. It is caused by their external motivation, and it influences their willing to learn reading lesson. They mentioned that the methods used in the classroom are not interesting enough, and the class atmosphere does not support their comfort.

In addition, it is found that the students have the internal motivation to improve their reading ability in which the efforts are recognized by increasing their vocabularies and memorizing any new words. Besides, they also have eager to improve their reading skill by keeping up their motivation to read a lot of English texts.

CONCLUSION

Reading is the ability to understand the written text. It helps students to get to know the information from their reading. Therefore, reading skill is an important skill that must be mastered by students. From the document study, there were only two students who could answer all questions about main ideas. It performed that the ability of students in mastering reading text and understanding main ideas categorized as a poor level.

Moreover, the result of questionnaires concluded that to improve students' good understanding in reading and finding main ideas, they motivate themselves to memorize some new vocabulary and to make some notes about them. Additionally, they spend some

additional time to study whether in group and individual to deepen their knowledge and to improve their reading skill.

This study set out for the reading class tutor to use the proper methods and strategies in handling the reading class. Hence, the students will get more motivated enough. As mentioned by Prastisi (2009), reading is a difficult process in which it involves visual activity, thinking, psycholinguistic, and metacognitive. It can be a foundation for reading teachers or tutors to select the appropriate methods.

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