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STUDENTS' READING ABILITY OF NARRATIVE TEXTS (A STUDY AT SMAN 2 VII KOTO SUNGAI SARIK OF PADANG PARIAMAN REGENCY)

Abstract

This descriptive research aimed to assess the reading comprehension abilities of students regarding narrative texts at SMAN 2 VII Koto Sungai Sariak of Padang Pariaman regency. The study utilized stratified cluster random sampling to select a sample of 60 students and collected data through a reading test. The study revealed that the students' overall ability to read narrative texts was low. Specifically, 65% of the students struggled to comprehend narrative texts. Within the narrative text components, 51% of students had difficulty understanding the orientation, 63% had trouble with the complication, 55% struggled with the resolution, and 67% found the reorientation challenging. Despite these difficulties, the study highlighted issues with students' learning motivation and the effectiveness of teaching strategies within the context of the current curriculum implementation, Kurikulum Merdeka. The study suggests that English teachers should revise narrative text lesson materials and teaching strategies to enhance student engagement and motivation, particularly for the Kurikulum Merdeka program. It also recommends vocabulary development and investigating students' reading difficulties for effective interventions.

Key words: Reading Comprehension, Narrative Texts, Teaching Strategies, Students' Motivation

INTRODUCTION

English is taught as a foreign language in Indonesian schools, with varying proficiency levels. It is an international language that connects countries and deepens scientific knowledge, as most science books are imported. English is prevalent in teaching materials, the internet, and public discourse. Thus, it is essential for Indonesian students to acquire or master English to compete in the era of globalization (Septy, 2017; 2018).

English language teaching in Indonesia prioritizes communicative competence, real-life communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Technology integration and multicultural awareness are also emphasized. Implementation varies by school, resource allocation, and educational priorities. Although the national curriculum has set the framework for English language teaching for decades, focusing on language skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing, as well as grammar and vocabulary, English is often considered a difficult subject for Indonesian students. This is partly because it is not the mother tongue or the national language used daily, which can lead to boredom and disinterest (Septy & Zuhari, 2023). This situation contributes to a low level of student mastery of English learning materials.

The 2024 Independent Curriculum offers flexibility and autonomy for schools in designing their curriculum (Rokayah, et.al, 2023), but it doesn't solve English language teaching problems. Teachers must find innovative teaching methods and technologies, and quality teaching and effective classroom management are crucial. Reading skills are essential for success in English and other content areas (Nunan, 2003:69; Hacettepe et.al, 2016: 108) and can be developed through formal education. However, developing reading skills is influenced by several factors such as task difficulty, student needs, student motivation, and teacher resources (Grabe et.al., 2002; Grabe, 2012) as well as the students' background knowledge, and

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concentration (Wainwright, 1977; Liu et.al, 2022; Sanir et al., 2023:19009- 19024). This condition is exacerbated by their generally low motivation in language learning, including reading.

This study examines students' reading skills in narrative texts, which not only entertains them but also helps develop their moral character (Setyosari, 2012: 221-223 & Hasanah, et.al, 2019). Narrative texts, including legends, fairy tales, folktales, and myths, convey meaningful lessons and values. Understanding these texts can be beneficial for the Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes character building and reading skills.

There were several studies that might share similarities and differences with this current study on narrative texts, while a notable difference is the inclusion of an analysis of writing narrative texts in the previous studies. For example, a study conducted by Yuvirawan, et al. (2021) suggested that students had significant problems in reading narrative texts. Then a study conducted by Farihah, et. al. (2023) indicated that students had a variety of abilities in understanding narrative texts. A study conducted by Susanti & Oktaviana (2023) assessing students' writing ability in narrative texts through quantitative research, suggested that students' summary writing skills are included in the "fair" category, with an average of 66.6.

In spite of this condition, this study was considered important for several reasons. First, it is evident that many students still encounter difficulties in comprehending narrative texts (Khoirunnisa & Widodo, 2019); Azra et.al., 2023; Damayanti, et.al. 2024). These challenges include (1) lack of motivation to read among students, (2) difficulty locating detailed information within the narrative text, (3) understanding the generic structure of narrative texts but having difficulty identifying it within the text, and last but not least (4) requiring an extended period to extract implicit information from the narrative text.

This study provides valuable insights for teachers, students, and future researchers. It helps teachers design effective teaching strategies, motivates students to improve reading skills, and serves as a reference for future research. The findings can help researchers explore factors influencing students' comprehension of narrative texts, contributing to education and literacy.

Preliminary observations at SMAN 2 VII Koto Sungai Sariaik revealed four main reading skills problems: low comprehension, difficulty understanding text, difficulty grasping narrative outlines, and time-consuming comprehension. English is perceived as difficult due to language differences. Teachers' methods, such as fast talking, unclear explanations, and monotonous techniques, can affect students' comprehension and interest in reading. Therefore, this study would further identify students' ability to comprehend narrative texts with its aspects such as orientation, complication, resolution and reorientation, at SMAN 2 VII Koto Sungai Sariaik of Padang Pariaman regency and reviewing several possible factors that may strongly be associated with it, i.e. motivation and teaching strategies within the context of the current curriculum, Kurikulum Merdeka (MOECRT-RI. 2024).

METHODOLOGY

This study was descriptive in nature, aligned with Gay's (1987:189) definition, which emphasized collecting data to address questions about the current status of the subject. This study aims to provide an accurate, factual, and systematic depiction of the subjects' ability to comprehend narrative texts at the time of this investigation. The population for this study consisted of eleventh-grade students at SMAN 2 VII Koto Sungai Sariaik of Padang Pariaman regency, totaling 118 students divided into four classes and two majors: MIPA and IPS.

Sampling entails choosing a smaller, representative portion from a larger population (Gay, et.al. 2012:124), this study applied a stratified cluster random sampling method which divided the population into two distinct groups: MIPA and IPS. From each group, one class was chosen to constitute the sample. To select the sample, each class was written on separate slips of paper and placed into two separate containers—one for MIPA and one for IPS. After thoroughly mixing the slips, one class was randomly selected from each container: XI MIPA 1 from MIPA and XI IPS 1 from IPS, resulting in a total of 60 students.

To collect data on students' reading comprehension of the narrative texts, a multiple-choice reading test format was used. There were 30 items of the test, which were categorized into four parts: 6 items for orientation, 11 items for complication, 9 items for resolution, and 4 items for reorientation. For the trial test, 40 minutes were given to the students, whereas the

actual test was completed in 30 minutes, a duration considered sufficient for the test's requirements. Each correct answer was awarded 1 point, and 0 points were received for incorrect answers.

Before administering the test to the sample group, a trial test was conducted with a separate group of students not included in the main study. The trial test, which consisted of 40 items, served several purposes: to ensure that students understood the test instructions, to assess whether the allocated time was sufficient for completion, and to evaluate the reliability of the test. Then, a series of analyses to evaluate the test's validity, reliability, and item effectiveness, ultimately selecting 30 items for the actual test, were conducted. Reliability, as defined by Gay, et.al. (2012:396), refers to the extent to which a test consistently measures what it aims to measure. In this study, the reliability of the test was assessed using the split-half method, which correlates scores from even-numbered and odd-numbered items. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used for this purpose, as outlined by Arikunto (2021:87).

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used for this purpose, as outlined by Arikunto (2021:87). Then to analyze the reliability coefficient for the entire test, the Spearman-Brown formula, a statistical method recommended by Arikunto (2012:223) for evaluating the consistency and reliability of test scores was applied. To classify the coefficient correlation of the test, the researcher used the category as follows (Arikunto, 2012:110).

0.81 – 1.00 = very high correlation

0.61 – 0.80 = high correlation

0.41 – 0.60 = moderate correlation

0.21 – 0.40 = low correlation

0.01- 0.20 = very low correlation

According to Gay, et.al. (2012:135), a good test should be both valid and reliable. The data analysis in this study revealed a reliability coefficient of 0.88, indicating very high reliability. This result demonstrates that the test was dependable and appropriate for use as the research instrument. Then, To evaluate the quality of the test items, item difficulty and item discrimination were analyzed. For item difficulty analysis, the formula recommended by Arikunto (2012:223) was employed then. Then, as suggested by Arikunto (2012:225), the test items were classified into three categories .

P = 0.00 – 0.30 (difficult)

P = 0.31 – 0.70 (moderate)

P = 0.71 – 1.00 (easy)

Item discrimination was evaluated by dividing students into two groups: the top half, designated as the high group, and the bottom half, designated as the low group. A criterion of 0.30 to 0.71 was used to assess item discrimination effectiveness. The analysis revealed that 36 items were moderately challenging, while 4 items were classified as difficult (see Appendix 6). As well, for the analysis of item discrimination, the formula recommended by Arikunto (2012:228) was employed. The result of the item discrimination was classified into the following categories; poor (.00 - .20), satisfactory (.21 - .40), good (.41 - .70), and excellent (.71 – 1.00). Item difficulty was evaluated using a range of 0.20 to 0.80, as recommended by Nurgiantoro (2010). According to McCowan & McCowan (1999) and Thorndike (in Azwar, 2009), during item selection, a discrimination value above 0.50 indicates a good item, while a discrimination index below 0.20 suggests that the item may be discarded. In this study, only items with a discrimination index greater than 0.20 were considered acceptable, and were categorized as satisfactory, good, or excellent. From the trial test, the researcher identified 4 items as good, 27 as satisfactory, and 9 as poor. Therefore, based on the analysis, 30 items were retained for the actual test.

The data for this research were derived from the students' scores on a reading comprehension test of the narrative texts. The following systematic steps were employed to evaluate the students' abilities; Administered the Test (provided the reading comprehension test to the students), Collected Answer Sheets (the completed answer sheets from the students were collected), Checked the Answers (meticulously checked the answers for correctness), Scored the Responses (Each correct answer was awarded 1 point, and each incorrect answer received 0

points), and Calculated Total Scores (calculated the total scores for each student by summing the points from their correct answers).

In particular, data of this study were analyzed with the following steps;

1) Presented the Raw Scores: the raw scores of each student based on their test responses were organized and displayed. These scores represented the number of correct answers each student achieved.

2) Converted Scores into Percentages: The raw scores were then converted into percentage scores using the following formula

3) This formula was applied to standardize the scores and express the students' performance as a percentage, making it easier to analyze and interpret the results.

$$\text{Students score} = \frac{\text{students' score}}{\text{maximum score}} \times 100$$

4) Then, students' abilities were classified based on the Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM) at SMAN 2 VII Koto Sungai Sariak of Padang Pariaman regency, with a KKM score of 77. The criteria for evaluation based on this KKM are outlined as follows; Excellent (80 - 100), Good (70 - 79), Satisfactory (60 - 69), and Needs Improvement (Below 60).

5) The number of students who exhibited high and low abilities were identified and recorded. Following this, the percentage of students falling into each category (high and low ability) were calculated using the formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P = percentage of the students' score

F = the sum of the students who get high, moderate, and low

N = the sum of the students

6) Finally, the results of the data analysis were interpreted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings on the Students' Ability to Comprehend the Narrative Text

The study evaluated students' comprehension of fairy tales, revealing a low level of understanding, with the highest score of 93, followed by 35% of students (21) and 65% (39), with the lowest score of 37.

Table 1: Summary of Students' Ability to Comprehend Narrative Texts

| Component | High Ability | Low Ability | Percentage with High Ability | Percentage with Low Ability |
|------------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Overall Comprehension | 21 (35%) | 39 (65%) | 35% | 65% |
| Orientation | 29 (48%) | 31 (52%) | 48% | 52% |
| Complication | 22 (37%) | 38 (63%) | 37% | 63% |
| Resolution | 27 (45%) | 33 (55%) | 45% | 55% |
| Reorientation | 20 (33%) | 40 (67%) | 33% | 67% |

To be more specific, the data analysis of this revealed the following explanation. First, the subjects' Overall reading Comprehension of narrative text indicated that 35% of students had a high ability to comprehend narrative texts, while 65% had low ability. Then, this profile could be categorized into specific elements of the narrative text comprehension, such as Orientation, Complication, Resolution, and Reorientation as presented in table 1. This finding may imply that many students struggled with complications and reorientation in comprehending reading of narrative text. Therefore, targeted teaching strategies seem to be needed to improve comprehension skills, particularly in weaker areas.

The study suggests that targeted teaching strategies and motivational factors are crucial for improving comprehension skills, especially in weaker areas. Students struggled with understanding complications and reorientation in narrative texts, with the highest score being 100 and the lowest being 50. Students scoring below 77, as this refers to the school KKM, were categorized as having low ability, while those scoring 77 or above were categorized as having high ability. There were 29 students (48%) in the high-ability category and 31 students (52%) in the low-ability category. Regarding students' ability to comprehend the complication of a narrative text, the data analysis revealed that the highest score was 91 and the lowest score was 27. Using the same categorization, 22 students (37%) were identified as having high ability, while 38 students (63%) were in the low-ability category. For students' ability to comprehend the resolution of a narrative text, the highest score was 100 and the lowest score was 22. In this category, 27 students (45%) demonstrated high ability, while 33 students (55%) demonstrated low ability. Lastly, the data on students' ability to comprehend the reorientation of a narrative text revealed that the highest score was 100 and the lowest score was 25. There were 20 students (33%) with high ability and 40 students (67%) with low ability.

Discussions on Issues Related to Students' Ability to Comprehend Narrative Texts

Reading comprehension is the process of interpreting written messages (Grabe, 2012), requiring readers to actively engage with the text to uncover underlying meanings (Chard, 2008). This cognitive activity is not passive but requires intentional interaction to derive meaning from the reading.

In relation to the findings of this study reflected in the results of the reading tests, this study highlights several important issues related to students' reading comprehension abilities. These issues align with those identified in the study's background, particularly concerning learning motivation and teaching strategies for reading. Both factors seem strongly affect the students' abilities theoretically and empirically, resulting in (a) low reading comprehension, (b) difficulty understanding texts, (c) struggles to grasp the outlines of different types of narrative texts, and (d) the need for a significant amount of time to understand the text.

English remains challenging for Indonesian students due to confusion, differences in meanings, and monotonous teaching practices. Teachers need to adopt better teaching practices and address student interest in reading and learning. In particular, in the current context of curriculum implementation, Kurikulum Merdeka (Anggraena, et.al, 2022; MOECRT-RI, 2024), this study would further argue the role of teaching that challenge to improve students' learning motivation and teaching strategies related to the reading comprehension of narrative text.

a). Students' Motivation to Develop Reading Skill

Students' motivation to develop reading skills plays a crucial role in their overall academic success and lifelong learning. Motivation can be defined as the internal drive that prompts students to engage in reading activities, persist in the face of challenges, and strive to improve their comprehension abilities. Several factors influence students' motivation to develop reading skills that are mainly Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation (Logan, et.al., 2011; Ives et. al., 2022).

Intrinsic motivation refers to students' internal desire to read for pleasure, interest, or personal satisfaction. Encouraging a love for reading through exposure to interesting and relevant texts can foster intrinsic motivation. Three key aspects to focus on for developing reading comprehension are self-efficacy, goal setting, and relevance and interest. Building self-efficacy involves guiding students' beliefs in their ability to succeed in reading tasks and providing appropriate challenge and support. Goal setting is crucial for learning motivation, as it guides students in setting achievable goals to improve their reading skills. Clear, measurable goals provide direction and purpose. Relevance and interest in reading activities, connecting reading activities to students' experiences and aspirations, enhance engagement and motivation.

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation also influences the students to manage their reading skill developed accordingly (Logan, et.al., 2011; Ives et. al., 2022). Several studies include external factors such as grades, rewards, and recognition that could also motivate students to develop their reading skills. Although extrinsic motivation would only be effective in the short term, it is important to balance it with strategies that could build intrinsic motivation for long-term engagement.

Extrinsic motivation in reading involves social support, teacher influence, and parent involvement. Social motivation involves peer interactions and collaborative activities, while teacher influence is crucial for motivating students. Teachers who model good reading habits, provide constructive feedback, and create a positive environment inspire reading skills.

Parental involvement is crucial for students' reading skill development, as it enhances motivation and creates a positive reading culture. This foster improved academic performance and a lifelong love for reading, thereby benefiting both educators and parents.

b) Teaching Strategies to Improve Students Reading Skill

The study found that most students struggle with comprehension of narrative texts, emphasizing the need for various teaching strategies to improve reading skills. These findings contrasted with previous studies by Baradika (2021) and Saputri (2021), which found that students generally had better abilities to comprehend narrative texts. Besides, these earlier studies did not specifically review the factors contributing to the variability in students' comprehension abilities. While past research indicated that students could effectively comprehend narrative texts, this recent study highlights the need for targeted interventions to address the specific challenges students face in understanding different components of the texts. Therefore, this study suggests that teaching factors and instructional strategies at the senior high school in Padang Pariaman Regency, in particular, should be reassessed. In other words, there is a need to improve teachers' teaching strategies to enhance students' understanding of narrative texts.

The study revealed that 65% of students struggle with reading comprehension, with specific challenges across narrative texts, highlighting the need for various teaching strategies to improve reading skills. For instance, 52% of students had a low ability to comprehend the orientation of narrative texts, 63% struggled with understanding the complication, 55% had difficulty with the resolution, and 45% showed a low ability to grasp the reorientation. Therefore, implementing targeted teaching strategies could significantly enhance students' reading skills by addressing these specific areas of difficulty and improving their overall comprehension, fluency, and engagement with narrative texts.

To be more specific, there are several aspects of targeted teaching strategies including Explicit Instruction in Reading Strategies, Differentiated Instruction, Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction, Vocabulary Development, Fluency Practice, Comprehension Instruction, Interactive Read-Alouds, and Use of Technology. How these strategies work could be explained as follow:

(1) Explicit Instruction in Reading Strategies and Comprehension Instruction

In applying these strategies, teachers should provide direct instruction on specific reading strategies such as predicting, questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and visualizing. By modeling these strategies through think-alouds and guided practice, students could learn how to apply them independently (Chinpakdee & Gu, 2021; Kasmiri, et.al.2023; Devi & Suroto, 2024). This explicit instruction would help students develop a toolkit of strategies to tackle different types of texts and comprehension challenges. Besides, teachers can use questioning techniques and activities that may promote higher-order thinking (Comprehension Instruction). By encouraging students to infer, predict, and summarize, they would deepen their understanding of the text. Making connections between the text and their own experiences, other texts, and the world around them could help students engage more deeply with what they read (Rahima, et.al, 2023).

(2) Differentiated Instruction, Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction

The students may have diverse reading levels and needs, and this is important how teachers recognize individual learning needs to which teachers should tailor their instruction accordingly (Padmore & Ali, 2024). This involves providing different texts for different reading groups, offering more challenging materials to advanced readers, and giving extra support to struggling readers. Differentiated instruction ensures that all students are appropriately challenged and supported, which can improve their reading skills over time.

In the aspect of phonemic awareness, teachers could use activities and programs focused on phonemic awareness (the ability to hear and manipulate sounds in words) and phonics (the relationship between letters and sounds). Games, songs, and systematic phonics

instruction would help students develop the foundational skills needed for decoding words. As students become more proficient in these areas, their ability to read and understand text would improve (Khan & Khan, 2021).

(3) Vocabulary Development and Fluency Practice

In developing vocabulary, teachers should introduce new vocabulary words in context and use tools like graphic organizers to help students understand and remember them. Encouraging students to use new words in writing and speaking would further reinforce their understanding. A strong vocabulary is essential for comprehension, as it allows students to understand more complex texts and concepts (Rahmah, et.al., (2023)).

Fluency practice, including repeated reading, choral reading, and reader's theatre, enhances students' reading comprehension through accuracy, speed, and expression, while feedback boosts confidence.

(4) Use of Technology

Technological advancements have enabled the use of digital tools like e-books, audiobooks, and educational apps to offer interactive, engaging reading experiences, personalized practice, and progress tracking (Khusniyah, 2022). These technologies could motivate students to read more and provide additional support for developing their reading skills (Septy, 2017; Septy & Afifa, 2023). Teachers can foster a supportive reading environment for all students, promoting strong reading skills for academic success and lifelong learning through a holistic approach.

CONCLUSION

English is taught in Indonesian schools as a compulsory subject alongside Bahasa Indonesia, focusing on communicative competence, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. The "Kurikulum Merdeka" curriculum promotes multicultural awareness and global citizenship.

This study examines Indonesian students' comprehension of narrative texts, revealing low mastery in English learning materials. Findings show students struggle with orientation, complication, resolution, and reorientation. The study emphasizes the need for improved instructional strategies and resources to enhance students' reading comprehension skills, highlighting the critical role of teaching in improving overall abilities.

In the current context of curriculum implementation, Kurikulum Merdeka, this study would further suggest improving the role of teaching that challenges students' learning motivation and teaching strategies related to the reading comprehension of narrative text. The "Kurikulum Merdeka 2024" aims to provide more flexibility and autonomy to schools in designing their curriculum. Along with the teacher profile of Guru Penggerak as labeled in the Kurikulum Merdeka, teachers become a key factor in developing students' character and reading skills in English. Teachers need to find the best ways to manage English lessons, incorporating innovative teaching methods and technologies, and they are the great innovators in the arena of English language teaching.

Based on the conclusions drawn from this study, several suggestions are offered for teachers, students, and future researchers:

For Teachers

1. Explore Diverse Teaching Methods: English teachers should use diverse instructional methods to enhance students' reading comprehension skills, cater to diverse learning styles, and improve overall understanding.
2. Provide Motivation: Teachers should actively motivate students both before and after lessons. Encouraging words, setting achievable goals, and recognizing progress could boost students' enthusiasm for learning English and improve their reading abilities.
3. Offer Support and Practice Opportunities: Teachers should provide students with engaging learning materials, extra practice opportunities, and relevant technology tools to reinforce reading skills and enhance their learning experience.

For Students

1. Enhance Reading Skills: Regular practice, expanding vocabulary, improving reading comprehension, and engaging with diverse English texts can enhance students' comprehension and analysis of narrative texts.

2. Self-Study and Practice: Students should dedicate time to self-study and practice reading English texts regularly. Exploring diverse genres and themes can deepen their understanding and improve their reading proficiency.

For Future Researchers

1. Utilize Findings for Further Research: This study provides valuable insights for future research on narrative text comprehension, paving the way for new methods, comparisons, and further exploration of reading comprehension.
2. Expand Research Scope: Researchers might consider expanding the scope of future studies to include a broader range of schools or educational levels. This can provide a more comprehensive understanding of reading comprehension issues and potential solutions.

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