AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT’S PROBLEMS IN COMPREHENDING DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPHS AT SMPN 6 KERINCI THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2017/2018

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ABSTRACT

Based on the problems above, the study is intended to know about the student’s problem in comprehending descriptive paragraphs. In this research, the researcher used a descriptive paragraph. It consisted of 10 multiple-choice questions and 5 essay questions. The purposes of this research were to know the student's problems in comprehending descriptive paragraphs and to know the cause of factors in the student's problems in comprehending descriptive paragraphs. The researcher used qualitative descriptive methods and the technique to collect the data are tests and interviews. The participant of this research is the class IX A students of SMPN Kerinci. The result of this research from 20 that there were 2,91% of students did problems identifying the main idea, 5,83% of students made mistakes identifying function, 8,74% of students did cannot identifying purposes, 37,87% students did not identify major tenses used in the paragraph there were 13,59% students. Then the interview results in the research find the cause of factors in students’ problems in comprehending paragraphs from 20 students’ there are 80% of students get problems in comprehending descriptive paragraphs caused by some factor. First, the students lack vocabulary by 30%. Second 20% of the students difficulties translate the paragraph. The third situation in the class influences 15% of students. Fourth 10% of the students’ experience had a low interest in learning. Finally, the students needed media in learning 5%.

Keywords: Comprehensions, Student’s Problem, Descriptive Paragraph,

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problems

Reading comprehension is a process in which readers construct meaning by interacting with a text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, and the stance the reader takes in relationship to the text.¹ Comprehension is the understanding and interpretation of what is read. To be able to accurately understand written material, students need to be able to (1) decode what they read; (2) make connections between what they read and what they already know; and (3) think deeply about what they have read.

Through reading, students will get more information also more knowledge. Reading is also something crucial and indispensable for students because the success of their studies

¹ Janette K. Klinger, Sharon Vaughn, Alison Boardman, Teaching Reading Comprehension to Students with Learning Difficulties (New York: Guilford press, 2000), P. 26
depends on the greater of their ability to read. If the students read often, especially English text can give the students more knowledge from the information in the text.

There was some common problem for Indonesian students in reading. Motivation was the first case that makes students eager or lazy in reading. Indonesian students lack intention in reading. They prefer chatting with friends or playing games to reading books. Second problem, most of the students lack in mastering vocabulary and the lack of students’ ability in reading comprehension. The third problem was the other cases in students’ attitudes that some of the students were noisy in class and they were also disturbing others students’ concentration when they were focusing on the lesson. Thus, it brought about an uncomfortable atmosphere in the classroom and finally reading subject was difficult for to be understood by students.

Then, also three crucial problems come from teachers. First, teachers were too dominant in a reading activity in a way that they just give little opportunity and time for students to act more in classroom reading activity so that the situation became monotonous. Because there was no feedback between the teacher and the students. Second, teachers seldom gave great motivation to students in reading comprehension. Teachers liked to teach students only by following lesson plans, giving an explanation, doing exercises, and giving the scores. And the last problem was the boring atmosphere when the teacher was teaching reading comprehension by using her/his power and forcing the students to do the teaching-learning process without paying attention to the student’s needs.

Only a few students could comprehend the paragraph, they also must have background knowledge. If the teacher wanted students to comprehend the paragraph, the teacher also must concern with their knowledge, for example, if the teacher showed a paragraph about other countries to a student who has never been to other countries, it could be some of them will do know what the information that they can from the paragraph. So that must be one of our attention.

**Review of related theories**

**Concept of Reading**

Reading is defined as an activity of looking at and understanding the meaning of written (printed word) or symbols. Thus, reading should be seen as an activity of thinking. The reading process states reading is a multidimensional cognitive process of decoding symbols to derive meaning. In addition, reading is an exercise dominated by the eyes and the brain. The eyes receive the message and the brain then has to work out the significance of this message.

Moreover, Reading is the most efficient way to process information. By reading we can know about the new information that has been written by the writer. The writer encodes the message to be got easily by the reader. In reading, we can find Essential information, main idea (topic sentence), topic, and supporting sentences. It will help the reader to recognize the writer’s means. So every writer always gives ease for the reader to get meaning through some word clue in media of reading.

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4 Elizabeth Chesla, *8th Grade Reading Comprehension Success*, (New York : Learning Express , LLC, 2001) p.121
Moreover, reading is also defined as a receptive skill in which a reader employs several skills involved to understand the reading selection to be read. The skill involves:

1. In predicative skill, the reader predicts what is going to be read and the process of understanding where the reader, sees how the content of the text matches up to the prediction.
2. Extracting specific information (scanning)
3. Getting a general picture of the main points of the text (skimming)
4. Inferring opinion and attitude
5. Deducing meaning from content
6. Recognizing functions and discourse patterns and markers.

So, reading demands a few skills to obtain an understanding of information about something that we are going to read. These skills are needed to get general or specific information rapidly though we do not read whole the reading.

Based on the explanation above, we can conclude that reading is one of the main skills that have to be mastered in studying English. Through this skill, the students are provided a chance to increase their knowledge, practice, and develop their critical thinking.

**The Indicator of Reading**

The question of reading involves these feature

1) Main idea (topic)
2) Expression/ idiom/ phrases in the context
3) Inference (implied detail)
4) Grammatical feature
5) Detail (scanning for a specifically stated detail)
6) Excluding facts not written (unstated detail)
7) The supporting idea
8) Vocabulary in context.

**Reading Skill**

Reading skill is the ability to relate the textual material to one”s knowledge by comprehending the text. The purpose or activity is language ideas. In reading, the process of thinking is very urgent and vital, because of the sentences they read.

There are four categories of skill and strategy of reading as follow:

a. Skill involving flexibility of technique variation in reading rate, skimming, scanning, extensive reading, and intensive reading.

b. The skill of utilizing information that is not strictly speaking part of the text itself: references apparatus, graphic conventions, illustrations, and diagrams.

c. Word attack skill: how to tackle unfamiliar lexical items by using morphology, and inference from context.

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d. The attack skill is the process of interpreting the text as a whole, using all the clues available including cohesion and theoretical structure. Reading involves a variety of skills to construct meaning from a text. The main ones are:

a. Recognizing the script of the language.
b. Deducing the meaning and use of the unfamiliar lexical item.
c. Understanding explicitly stated information.
d. Understanding when not explicitly stated.
e. Understanding conceptual meaning.
f. Understanding the communicative value (function) of sentences and utterances.
g. The understanding relation between parts of a text through grammatical cohesion devices.
h. Identifying the main point /idea or important information in a piece of discourse.
i. Distinguish the main idea from supporting details.
j. Skimming.
k. Scanning to locate specifying required information.

Reading Strategy
Those the strategy help the students become purposeful and active reader to control their reading in order or comprehend the whole meaning of a text. Principle strategies of reading, are as follows:

a. Identify the purpose of reading.
b. Apply spelling rules and conversations for bottom-up decoding.
c. Use lexical analysis (prefixes, roots, suffixes, etc.) to determine to mean.
d. Guess at meaning (of words, idioms, etc.) when you are not certain.
e. Skim the text for the gist and main ideas.
f. Scan the text for specific information.
g. Use silent reading techniques for rapid processing.
h. Use margin notes, outlines, charts, or a semantic map for understanding and retaining information.
i. Distinguishing between literal and implied meaning.
j. Capitalize on discussed markers to process.

The Purpose Reading
The purposes of reading asked for personal reasons as follow:

a. Reading for survival
   Reading for survival is reading a text that is very crucial for life, for example, a warning sign, an admonition sign, an instruction sign, etc. Survival reading serves the immediate need.
b. Reading for learning
   It is expected to be exclusive in school. Reading is the support to learning in the class. The reader needs to translate the text, literally or metaphorically, to learn vocabulary, identify useful structure, use a text as a model for writing, and practice pronunciation.

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6Cristine Nuttal, Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language, (Macmillan: 2008), P. 31-32
c. Reading for pleasure.
   It is reading to get happiness. They want to enjoy the rhythm or rhyme of the text.
   Meanwhile, reading is very important to do for all people as what has been stated,
   there are main reasons for reading, that is reading for pleasure.\(^9\)

**The Meaning of Comprehension**

Comprehending is the main purpose of the reading activity. People read something to be able to comprehend the reading material to be read. Besides, there is no reading without comprehension. Therefore, comprehension is considered a complex cognitive process of understanding the whole content of a text simultaneously.\(^10\)

Comprehending can be defined as the ultimate level of reading activity in which the reader understands the text and they can connect the new text with past experiences, interpret, evaluate, synthesize, and consider alternative interpretations of what they have read.

Comprehension is “intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader”.\(^11\) When the reader makes a deep connection to his reading such as with text, then his mind focused on it so that comprehension happens. In addition, it is such a process in which readers construct meaning by interacting with the text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, and the stance the reader takes in relationship to the text.

Comprehension is also the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language.\(^12\) As we know that the process that happens during we deal with written language lead us to extract the meaning or we construct our meaning so at that time we get comprehension. The explanation above indicates that the comprehension process is where a reader can use their knowledge to connect with the material of reading and the reader understand the text that can be employed in the process of reading activity.

**Descriptive Paragraph**

A descriptive paragraph describes how something or someone looks or feels. It gives an impression of something. If you only wanted to explain to someone what a samovar is, for example, you could write a definition paragraph because a definition paragraph does not include how the writer feels.\(^13\) It explains the characteristics of something or someone through detailed information both physically or conditionally even though we do not mention the name of something or someone.

The ability to describe people, places, or objects accurately is a useful life skill. A descriptive paragraph gives a clear picture of a person, place, object, event, or idea. Details for descriptive paragraphs come from the writer’s senses-smell, taste, touch, hearing, and sight.\(^14\)

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\(^10\) Janette K. Klinger, Sharon vaughn, Alison Boardman, *Teaching Reading Comprehension to Students with Learning Difficulties* (New York: Guilford press, 2000), P.16
Sometimes we also use it to give descriptions about people, places, or objects to be easy to understand and sometimes we use it when we remind our friends about people, places, or objects that maybe he or she forgets.

Another research English Education Department Islamic Education and Teacher Training Faculty the State Islamic Institute of Surakarta research about “An Analysis of Students’ Problems in Comprehending Descriptive Text on the MTs Negeri Mlinjon Klaten.” Then, the other research explains that Students’ problems in understanding a descriptive text, there are students get the problem looking for the identifying main idea of the text and identifying specific words in the text and many students have difficulty understanding the structure of the text, because they have a limited vocabulary. The students cannot understand the material. They do not understand when finding a long text. The students have a problem visualizing the text of the material. From the result of the data analysis of the interview, the researcher found three factors causing the students’ difficulties in comprehending Descriptive Text. They concern with the learners’ background, the teacher’s technique, and the learners’ environment. In this study, the writer wants to know more about the analysis of students’ problems in comprehending descriptive texts at SMPN 6 Kerinci in the academic year 2017/2018.

INSTRUMENTS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The instrument of the research was the tool for collecting data that was needed by the researcher. The instrument of collecting data was a favor that was picked and used by the researcher in his/her activity in collecting data to be systematic and simplified. In this research, the researcher used three instruments that were interview and documentation.

The first instrument was an interview, which is a meeting of two persons to exchange information and idea through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic. So the interview that happened was between two people to dig for the information needed. The interview was divided into a few types that are structured interview (the researcher already know exactly what information will be gained so the researcher prepares the research instrument such as written question and alternative answer); semistructured interview (conducting the interview was clearer, and aim to find the problem openly where opinion and idea were asked from the respondents); nonstructured interview (it was a free interview where the researcher does not use manual interview which already prepares systematically and complete to collect data). To collect data, the researcher needs an interview guide to get an easier way. The interview was used to find out the difficulties of students in comprehending descriptive text.

Documentation study was one of the Qualitative methodologies in collecting data by seeing or analyzing documents which were made by the researcher itself or others about the subject through written media. Through documentation, the researcher can see or analyze the data through written media to get information. The documentation method was seeking data likely notes, transcripts, books, newspapers, magazines, epigraphy, legger, etc. So to get data, the researcher can find it from various written media.
Research instruments through documentation were something which gives proof or material to comparing statements or information, explanation or documentation in genuine script or written information. From various documentation, the researcher can get what it takes as evidence for his/her research and then compare the information from written proof. Well, documentation was the way of collecting data through written media especially files and books, and statements that have a connection with research. In this research, the documentation was taken from students and teachers.

**Design of the Research**

This research was conducted by using the Qualitative descriptive method. In this research, the researcher describes the situation or phenomenon through an inductive approach. Whereas the activity or special phenomenon was interpreted in a common conclusion. This research focused on the whole imaging of affective and social strategy in comprehending descriptive paragraphs. In this descriptive qualitative research well known as informant term, that was the doer who gave information for research necessity. Qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation.

**FINDINGS**

The process of reading teaching was found during three observation periods. There were many things that the researcher learned from the observation. These were the result of each meeting of teaching listening which were obtained during the observation. The first finding was the monotonous Teaching Process. The teacher should choose an activity that would encourage and attract the students’ attention to listen better and arrange the activities which were going to be used in the class. To overcome this problematic condition, the teacher explained the materials several times until the students’ understood. When learning reading teaching, the students can get bored, because in that case hopefully, the teacher could give some variety of strategies for teaching reading to feel interested. The second finding was Students were supposed to grasp the contents of what they read. Some students in the classroom were not able to comprehend information related to the text. Some of the students could not answer the questions related to the text or even comprehend what the text was about.

From the observation, the researcher also found that the teacher did not give motivation to students about learning descriptive paragraphs. Until, the student’s poor motivation to learn this study. The observation result proves the teacher’s motivation, every student needed to help improve the students’ interest in learning descriptive paragraphs.

In comprehending, one point important is vocabulary. Because the students will be very difficult in comprehending a foreign language or English if their vocabulary is little. Besides, the atmosphere also can influence their concentration or focus in getting meaning from what their read. After the researcher filled data collection with an interview the students class IX A of Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri (SMPN) 6 Kerinci. In this case, the writer tried to get

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19 Kamarudin.. *Pengantar Metodologi Riset.* (Bandung : Angkasa. 1972), P. 50.
20 Jhon W. Creswell, *Research design.* ( Los Angles: University of Nebraska-Lincoln )P.34
data for the research. The data was students’ problems in comprehending descriptive paragraphs.

From the interview with the students class IX A amount 21 students, obtained information and data were varied. For example, one of the students said could not comprehend descriptive paragraphs because his English was not good, and difficult to translate English to Indonesian. So, he hoped in studying descriptive paragraphs the teacher could use media like a picture in order to facilitate the students’ comprehend it quickly.

Based on the data from the interview with the students, the researcher found some problems that students faced. For example, there were students who had some problem with themselves and there were from the teacher or atmosphere in the class. Many problems the students’ faced in comprehending descriptive paragraphs, that occur from themselves. As stated above, one of the problems was the students’ low vocabulary. Below are the results of the interview with one of the students:

Researcher : “bagaimana anda bisa tidak mengerti bahasa inggris sedangkan anda sudah cukup lama belajar bahasa inggris?”
Informant 1 : “hal itu dikarenakan saya tidak memiliki vocabulary yang banyak.”

The same case was also faced by one student that got some problems comprehending descriptive paragraphs. Below is the result of the interview:

Researcher : “Apakah anda memiliki kesulitan atau masalah dalam memahami descriptive paragraph?”
Informant 8 : “Guru sering menggunakan B. Inggris dalam belajar.”
Researcher : “seharusnya itu hal yang wajar karena kita sedang belajar bahasa Inggris?”
Informant 8 : “ya, mungkin hal itu dirasa wajar oleh teman teman yang lain namun lain halnya saya karena kosa kata saya dalam bahasa inggris sangat sedikit.”

So, based on the result of the interview done by the researcher with the students’, we could see that vocabulary became a problem for some students. Many of the students did not know the vocabulary meaning. Because of that, comprehending students to descriptive paragraphs became difficult for students. Besides that, another student also said that the problem was similar to the students before. The result of the interview with the students is below:

Researcher : “Apakah anda memiliki kesulitan atau masalah dalam memahami descriptive paragraph?”
Informant 2 : “karena bahasa yang terlalu sulit dipahami dan kadang ada kosa kata yang yang jarang saya dengar (tidak general).”

Besides vocabulary, another student’s problem in comprehending descriptive paragraphs was difficulty in translating descriptive paragraphs into Indonesian. It had been said by some of the students. In translating reading was very important to get the meaning and comprehend what the students’ read. As a state that studies English as a foreign language, the ability to
translate is very needed. But it had become a problem for the students in SMPN 6 Kerinci. Below are the results of the interview:

Researcher: “Apakah anda memiliki kesulitan ataupun masalah dalam memahami descriptive paragraph?”

Informant 3: “lumayan kesulitan ketika menyusun kalimat-kalimat yang telah saya translitkan ke bahasa Indonesia karena sering artinya tidak nyambung.

Based on the data from the interview above, we could know that the student’s problems translating descriptive paragraphs until they could not get the meaning of the descriptive paragraph. The result of the interview with another teacher is also like that. The result of the interview with the teacher is below:

Researcher : “Apakah anda memiliki kesulitan ataupun masalah dalam memahami descriptive paragraph?”

Informant 4: “Ketika saya menjabarkannya ke dalam B.indonesia sering sekali artinya jadi tidak nyambung. Karena ada kata-kata yang jarang saya dengar.”

Translating is one of the ways students can get meaning or comprehend a descriptive paragraph. But, sometimes in the paragraph, there are some words unfamiliar until the students get to lose their understanding and automatically get the wrong meaning. Another source of students’ problems in comprehending descriptive paragraphs besides themselves is the situation in the class. The students’ said that the atmosphere also become a problem in comprehending descriptive paragraphs. The result of the interview is below.

Researcher : “Apakah anda memiliki kesulitan ataupun masalah dalam memahami descriptive paragraph?”

Informant 5: “Gagal fokus karena sering diganggu teman-teman waktu belajar dan sering mengantuk.”

In the study of comprehension, concentration is very influential in getting meaning from what they read. Naturally, lack of concentration is due to the atmosphere in the class happens because other students make situations in the class become noisy. In learning English the students’ at SMP Negeri 6 Kerinci very needed some media besides a textbook, for example, a laptop or picture. But it was one problem the students faced in comprehending descriptive paragraphs. The interview result below:

Researcher : “Apakah ada media yang digunakan guru dalam pembelajaran descriptive paragraph?”

Informant 6: “Tidak ada.”

Researcher : “apakah ada motivasi-motivasi yang diberikan guru kepada anda?”

Informant 6: “Jarang, paling hanya mengatakan rajin belajar, jangan lari ketika belajar hanya seperti itu.”

Researcher : “Menurut anda, jika diperkenankan apakah ada media yang anda butuhkan dalam belajar memahami descriptive paragraph?”
Informant 6: “Ya. Kalau saya pribadi lebih menginginkan video slide yang berisi gambar-gambar tentang peristiwa-peristiwa sesuai dengan yang digambarkan dalam paragraph itu sendiri. Mungkin saja dengan hal itu mempermudah saya memahami paragraph tersebut,”

In the interview, other students also said the same. Informant 5 says the teacher never used media in teaching descriptive paragraphs. That becomes a problem for students learning English, especially in comprehending descriptive paragraphs. Here is the interview below:

Researcher: “Apakah ada media yang digunakan guru dalam pembelajaran descriptive paragraph?”

Informant 7: “Tidak ada.”

Researcher: “Apakah guru sering memberi motivasi tentang pembelajaran.”

Informant 7: “Sangat jarang sekali”

Researcher: “Menurut anda, jika diperkenankan apakah ada media yang anda butuhkan dalam belajar memahami descriptive paragraph?”

Informant 7: “Saya akan lebih mengerti atau memahami descriptive paragraph jika ada gambar yang mendukung paragraph tersebut sebagai petunjuk.”

From the interview above, the students very much needed media for the learning process. It could help the students easily to comprehending descriptive paragraphs. But at SMP Negeri 6 Kerinci, the students do not get it. Big hope of students can get it media for learning. Besides the interview with the students’ the writer interview one of the English teachers. The Teacher was extend some problems almost the same as the students’. But there was one problem that the students did not extend. It was the students’ low interest in learning descriptive paragraphs. Based on the interview with the English teachers, he said:

Researcher: “According to you, what are the students’ common problems that you face as long teaching English?”

Teacher: “kesulitan umum yang dimiliki siswa tentunya minimnya kosa kata siswa, kurangnya minat belajar bahasa Inggris siswa sehingga mereka susah fokus belajar.”

Researcher: “What are the students’ common problems in teaching reading comprehension especially in teaching descriptive paragraphs.”?

Teacher: “permasalahan umum siswa dalam belajar reading salah satunya saperti yang saya katakan tadi yaitu (1) minimnya kosa kata siswa, (2) siswa malas untuk membaca dan menyimak, (3) siswa suka ribut, dan (4) malas bertanya.

From the interview above, the writer trusted that the students get problems because had a low interest in learning descriptive paragraphs. Although the teacher gives some motivation.

Conclusion

The students of SMP Negeri 6 Kerinci have some problems comprehending descriptive paragraphs. The problems are the students’ lack of vocabulary, difficulties in translating descriptive paragraphs, the problem with the situation in the class, the lack of learning media,
and the students’ low interest in learning descriptive paragraphs. Of 21 students’ there are 76.2% of students get problems comprehending descriptive paragraphs. First, the students lack vocabulary 28.60%. Second 19.04% of the students difficulties translate the paragraph. The third situation in the class influences 14.28% of students. Fourth 9.52% of the student’s experience had a low interest in learning. Finally, the students needed media in learning by 4.76%. Next 9.52% of the students said not have problems and 14.28% did not respond.

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