

Literal Reading Comprehension Ability of English Study Program Students of Politeknik Negeri Jember

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Abstract

This article addresses the result of study that was carried out at the English Study Program, Politeknik Negeri Jember. This research was conducted to determine reading comprehension ability especially literal reading comprehension ability. The study is a descriptive quantitative research because it describes students' literal reading comprehension ability. In this study, data was used to describe and report students' ability in understanding literal text. In this study, researcher used a purposive sampling technique so that he made all students of the English Study Program in Semester1 for the 2020/2021 Academic Year as samples to be studied in this study. The samples taken in this study were 64 students who took reading course (literal reading course). To analyse the data in this study, the researcher conducted a literal reading test to measure their literal reading comprehension ability.

Keywords: *literal reading, comprehension, ability, students, English Study Program*

1. Introduction

Reading is the most important English skill for the students. When they want to master English well, they must master reading skill. Besides, reading is the key of academic success for the students. Scott and Saaiman (2016) stated that it is essential for the students to develop reading skill because as good students, they should have good reading skills and in the learning process they have to be able to read. In addition, Palani in Scott and Saaiman (2016) stated that the most important skill in conducting effective learning and achieving the academic success is reading.

Reading is an activity carried out to get information from a text. To get information from the text, it requires the ability to understand the text. As stated by Okwilagwe in Balan et. al. (2019), reading is an activity of meaningful interpretation of words, phrases, and sentences. Therefore, reading comprehension is the ability to comprehend the content of the text, understand its meaning, and integrate it with what the readers already knows or their background knowledge.

Components of reading comprehension according to Golinkoff in Zuchdi (2008), three main components in comprehending the text namely decoding, acquisition of lexical meaning (using written words), and text organization, which is in the form of acquiring

meaning from units that are broader than words. The acquisition of meaning from written units that are broader than words is what most writers mean by the term reading comprehension. In line with that, Marx et. al. (2015) argued that besides decoding and skills related to linguistic comprehension, working memory is becoming an important determinant of reading comprehension.

Beside components of reading comprehension, several factors that influence reading comprehension must be considered in doing reading activities. As stated by Dennis (2008), there are some factors that affect reading comprehension skill namely complexity of the reading text, environmental influences, anxiety during reading comprehension, interest and motivation, decoding or word recognition speed, and medical problems. Then, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) indicated that the readers have to identify the factors that can influence them in understanding the text they read. Moreover, the readers should use various reading strategies in reading the text. All of these factors and strategies should be elaborated to make reading process easily and effectively.

The level of comprehending the text adapted from Bloom's taxonomy related to classification of reading comprehension according to Barrett in Zuchdi (2008) that there are four levels of reading comprehension, namely recognition and literal recall, inferential comprehension, assessment and appreciation. Related to this, Smith's opinion in Zuchdi (2008), classified reading comprehension into four levels, namely 1) literal comprehension, namely the skill of getting the main literal meaning; 2) interpretation, namely research to obtain a deeper meaning; 3) critical reading, namely personal assessment; and 4) creative reading, which starts with asking questions and continues with the implications (application) of the reading. Furthermore, Day and Park (2005) also proposed several types of comprehension such as literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, reorganization, predictive comprehension, evaluative comprehension, appreciative or personal comprehension. From those opinions, it can be concluded that literal reading comprehension is the basic skill of reading. It is the simplest form of comprehension and a low level of comprehension.

Literal reading comprehension is an understanding of information and facts that are directly stated in the text. This ability is considered the first and most basic level of comprehending the text. Readers can use literal comprehension skills like finding the keywords, skimming, and scanning to find information more efficiently. According to Burns et. al. (1999) defined literal understanding as the ability to directly understand the ideas expressed in written text, recognize details and sequences, and understand cause-and-effect relationships. Even though literal reading comprehension is the low level skill in reading but it is very important for the teachers to develop the students' literal comprehension skill because it is the basic skill for the students before they master other skills in reading. Nurjanah and Putri (2022) stated that literal reading, being the lowest level of understanding, is regarded important, so it is necessary for the students to develop this skill. This statement was based on their research findings that the students with good and very good mastery of literal reading comprehension had good mastery of interpretive, critical and creative reading comprehension. On the other hand, the students with poor

mastery of literal comprehension did not have good results on interpretive, critical and creative level

Based on the background above, the researcher conducted a study to determine literal reading comprehension ability of the students of the English Study Program. This study was conducted to know the success of teaching and learning process has been carried out so far at English Study Program.

2. Methods

This study was conducted at Politeknik Negeri Jember. This study aims to look at the ability of the English Study Program students in understanding texts explicitly or literal reading comprehension. The subjects of this study were students of the English Study Program Semesters 1 in the 2020/2021 Academic Year.

This study is a quantitative and descriptive study because it describes students' reading abilities. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012) use the term survey research used to report data as it is. In addition, Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012) stated that descriptive research involves sequential data collection to obtain answers to research questions about the status of research subjects. In this study, data was used to describe and report students' ability in understanding literal texts.

The data obtained in this study was primary data, namely the source of research data obtained directly from the original source in the form of reading test scores for students. The instruments were used to collect data related to research problems and so that research results become measurable. The instrument used in this study was a reading test. A reading test was used in this study to determine students' reading comprehension ability. Students were given some readings and some questions related to the text. By taking the reading test, students' ability to understand the text they read can be known because the test can measure their reading ability. The tests to be used in this study were taken from various sources. Moreover, the literal reading comprehension test was analysed to know the quality of the test items. The analysis were based on item difficulty by using the following formula:

Item Difficulty:

$$FV=R/N$$

Where:

FV : Difficulty index

R : Right number

N : Number of students who taking a test

Difficulty Index Categories:

0.00-0.30 : Difficult

0.31-0.70 : Fair

0.71-1.00 : Easy

Based on the instrumentation of the study, the data collected by delivering the reading test, since it was used to see students' ability in understanding explicit meaning in reading text. Then, in analysing the data, the result of students reading test was scored by researcher himself, since the answer of reading test are already provided by the researcher.

The result of data analysis of this research can be categorized as follows.

<u>Score:</u>	<u>Category:</u>
85-100	High
80-84	High
75-79	High
65-69	Moderate
60-64	Moderate
55-59	Moderate
50-54	Low
40-49	Low
<39	Low

3. Results and Discussion

The data of this study was taken from reading test to see the students' ability in understanding explicit meaning in reading text. The questions of the test consisted of 35 items that should be answered in 60 minutes by the students. There were 64 students who became the sample of this research. The scores of the students were collected from reading test.

a. The Literal Reading Comprehension Test Difficulty

There were 35 questions in the literal reading comprehension test. There test was divided into some parts related to the micro skills in literal reading comprehension skill. The result of data analysis can be described as follows:

Table 1. The Index Difficulty of Literal Reading Comprehension Test

No.	Description of the Item Test	Number of Item Test	Right Number	Number of Students	Result	Difficulty Index Category
1.	Item test about finding word meaning	5	308	64	0,96	Easy
2.	Item test about comprehending the sentence	5	252	64	0,79	Easy
3.	Item test about finding topic of the text	5	193	64	0,60	Fair
4.	Item test about finding main idea of the paragraph	5	305	64	0,95	Easy

5.	Item test about identifying references	5	203	64	0,60	Fair
6.	Item test about distinguishing fact and opinion	5	252	64	0,79	Easy
7.	Item test about recognizing paragraph pattern	5	260	64	0,80	Easy
10	All item test in in literal reading comprehension test	35	1773	64	0,79	Easy

The result of data analysis related to the index difficulty of reading comprehension test showed that the index difficulty of the test is easy because most of the students can answer the item test correctly. Among the 64 students who joined the test it was found 1773 right numbers from the total numbers 2240. Then, the result of data analysis of index difficulty was 0,79. It was categorized easy. It means that the students can answer most of the item test correctly.

This literal reading comprehension test consisted of seven parts. They were the item test about finding word meaning, comprehending sentence, finding topic, finding main idea, identifying references, distinguishing fact and opinion, and recognizing paragraph pattern. The result of data analysis showed that the five parts of the test were categorized easy. They were finding word meaning (0,96), comprehending sentence (0,79), finding main idea (0,95), distinguishing fact and opinion (0,79), and recognizing paragraph pattern (0,81). Then, the result of data analysis showed that the two parts of the test were categorized fair. They were finding topic (0,60) and identifying references (0,60).

b. The Students' Scores on Literal Reading Comprehension Test

The result of data analysis related to the students' scores on reading comprehension test showed that the most of the students' scores were categorized high because most of the students got the scores more than 75. Among 64 students who joined the test, there were 47 (73%) students got the scores more than 75. The result of data analysis can be described as follows:

Table 2. The Students' Scores of Literal Reading Comprehension Test

Score	Number of Students	Percentage (%)	Category	
85-100	22	34%	Very Good	High
80-84	15	23%	Very Good	High
75-79	8	13%	Good	High
70-74	6	9%	Good	High
65-69	7	10%	Fair	Middle
60-64	4	6%	Fair	Middle

55-59	1	2%	Poor	Low
50-54	1	2%	Poor	Low
40-49	-	-	Very Poor	Low
<39	-	-	Very poor	Low

From the table above, it can be seen that most of the students' scores were categorized high. There were 58 (79%) students got high scores. The score of 37 (57%) students were categorised very good and the score of 14 (21%) students were categorised good. Then, then there were 11 (19%) students got middle scores. The score of 11 (19%) students were categorised fair. Finally, there were 2 (4%) students got low scores. The score of 2 (4%) students were categorised poor and no score was categorised very poor.

The findings showed that the students' scores of literal reading comprehension was high. It can be described in more detailed information based on the scores of literal reading comprehension test for each micro skills. The description are as follows:

Table 3. The Students' Scores of Micro Skills in Literal Reading Comprehension Test

No.	Description of the Item Test	Number of correct answers	Total number of Item Test	Percentage (%)
1.	Item test about finding word meaning	308	320	96%
2.	Item test about comprehending the sentence	252	320	79%
3.	Item test about finding topic of the text	193	320	60%
4.	Item test about finding main idea of the paragraph	305	320	95%
5.	Item test about identifying references	203	320	63%
6.	Item test about distinguishing fact and opinion	252	320	79%
7.	Item test about recognizing paragraph pattern	260	320	81%
	Total	1773	2240	

From the table above, it can be seen that the students' ability in finding the word meaning was high because most or 96% students can answer the questions correctly. The

students' ability in comprehending the sentence was also high because many or 73% students can answer the questions correctly. Then, the students' ability in finding the topic of the text was middle because only several or 60% students can answer the questions correctly. Next, the students' ability in finding main idea of the paragraph was high because most or 95% students can answer the questions correctly. In addition, the students' ability in identifying references was middle because only several or 63% students can answer the questions correctly. Finally, the students' ability in distinguishing fact & opinion and recognising paragraph pattern was high because most of the students or 79% students and 81% students can answer the questions correctly. These findings showed that in general, the students' ability in literal reading comprehension was high. It was indicated from the result of literal reading comprehension test that there were 1773 correct answers from 2240 item test.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the identification and analysis of literal reading comprehension test of the students of English Study Program, it can be concluded that:

1. In general, the students of English Study Program did not get a difficulty in answering the questions of literal reading comprehension test because the result of analyzing the index difficulty of the test was 0,79. It means that the test was categorized easy for the students.
2. The students' achievement in literal reading comprehension test was high because the result of analyzing the scores of test showed that there were 58 of 64 students or 79 % students got good and very good scores. It means that the scores were categorized high.

From the result, it can be concluded that in general, the literal reading comprehension ability of English Study Program students was very good or high.

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Appendix 1. The Students' Literal Reading Comprehension Scores

No.	Scores	No.	Scores	No.	Scores	No.	Scores
1.	91	17.	66	33.	54	49.	80
2.	86	18.	86	34.	66	50.	83
3.	83	19.	80	35.	69	51.	63
4.	74	20.	77	36..	80	52.	83
5.	80	21.	89	37.	94	53.	86
6.	80	22.	69	38.	71	54.	66
7.	86	23.	80	39.	77	55.	89
8.	89	24.	97	40.	94	56.	60
9.	89	25.	74	41.	77	57.	97
10.	86	26.	83	42.	77	58.	91
11.	83	27.	80	43.	97	59.	80
12.	86	28..	94	44.	83	60.	71
13.	86	29.	89	45.	86	61.	77
14.	71	30.	66	46.	77	62.	74
15.	60	31.	86	47.	77	63..	80
16.	63	32.	77	48.	66	64.	57