The Students' Reading Competence in SMP N 2 Bantarkawung in
the Academic year 2017/2018

Erwin Wicaksono

Mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FPB UMY

Abstract

Reading is one of the language skill that is important for students. This skill needs to be learned by the students. The students would be able to understand the content of a text by reading. The aim of this research was to describe the students' reading competence in Public Junior High School of 2 Bantarkawung, Brebes in the Academic year of 2017/2018. The research was quantitative method. The subject of this research was the Eighth Grade students of Public Junior High School 2 Bantarkawung, Brebes in the Academic year of 2017/2018. The sample was 53 students. In data collection, the data of students' reading competence were collected using a standardized reading test. The test was done at the end of 2017/2018 Academic year. The data revealed that there were 13 students who got very high scores because they could answer 81-100% of the test items. Then 29 students got high scores because they could answer 61-80% of the test items. Then 7 students who got moderate scores they just could answer 41-60% of the test items. Moreover, there were 4 students who got low scores they just could answer 21-40% of the test items. It is found that the average of students' score reading competence level was 71.66, and it can be said that most of students at Public Junior High School 2 Bantarkawung are in the high level of reading competence or not particularly strong one.

Keywords: Students' Reading Competence, National Exam

Introduction

The reading ability is a significant indicator of academic success (Khajavi & Ketabi, 2012). In addition, reading in second language comprehension is also considered as an essential skill because a lot of scientific and technological information is published in English (Tabatabaei & Assari, 2011). Reading is one of the language skills that is important for students. This skill needs to be learned by the students. The students would be able to understand the content of a text by reading. It is appropriate with the statement from Schwartz (1994) who states that "Reading comprehension is not about memorizing and remembering what you read, rather about understanding the ideas conveyed and followed the author's train of thought and reasoning".(Cited in Anggraeny, 2011).

From the statement above, it is clear that reading does not only need ability in memorizing and remembering, but also ability in understanding about what the students read and following the author's mind. Reading is also something crucial and indispensable for the students because the success of their study depends on the greater part of their ability to read. On the other hand, if they have a good ability in reading, they would have a better chance to succeed in their study. In reading, to comprehend the text, the readers should be able to manage every part of the text, because it is easy to gain the

competence in reading when the readers are able to organize the text. Sometimes, it is important for them to comprehend a reading text having knowledge in general view of the text.

Based on the interview to English teachers at Public Junior High School of 2 Bantarkawung, in Brebes, Central Java, the teacher explained that most students could not understand a passage of the reading text, especially in vocabulary, reading competence and grammatical structure so that they got difficulties and low score in reading. The teacher always asked the students to read passage one by one. Most of the students have difficulty to understand the text and to pronounce the word of the text. If these happened, the teacher

corrected directly. The teacher informed that most of students were not interested in reading activity.

Research Methodology

Quantitative method is a method that emphasizes objectively measuring aspects of social phenomena. To be able to make measurements, each social phenomenon is described into several problem components, variables and indicators. Each variable that is specified is measured by giving different symbol numbers according to the category of information related to that variable (Arikunto, 1993:139). The design of this research begins with the problem that is quantitative and limit the existing problems in the formulation of the problem.

The formulation of the problem is expressed in the sentence of the question, then the researcher uses the theory to answer it. Descriptive research is a study used to describe and answer the problems of a phenomenon or events that occur today, both about the phenomenon in a single variable or correlation and or the comparison of various variables (Zainal Arifin, 2011:78). Meanwhile, according to Nana Sudjana (1989), descriptive research takes the problem or focuses on actual problems as they are at the time of the research, the research description in education is more functioning for the solution of practical problems of education, very little function for the development of science. This research consists of one variable, the variable is reading competence.

The researcher would know about students' reading competence. The researcher took this school as the setting of the research because this school is one of the favorite school in Bantarkawung Brebes. The researcher would be easier in taking the required data because he has received permission for the research to carried out the students of Eighth Grade of Public Junior High School of 2 Bantarkawung 2017/2018. The school give the researcher acces to conducting his research. So the researcher is more excited about doing research at the school.

Population is a generalization region consisting of objects / subjects that have certain qualities and characteristics set by researchers to be studied and then drawn conclusions. While the sample is part of the number and characteristics possessed by the population Arikunto (2011). In line with the opinion that the sample is part or representative of the population under study. The population in this study are class VIII students (as many as 2 Classes) with the number of students as much as 53 participants, and the population of the question of national exam were four sample manuscript of 50 questions.

According to Sugiyono (2013), the sample is part of that population. The population is for example residents in certain areas, number of employees in certain organizations, number of teachers and teachers in certain schools and so on. According to Arikunto (2011) also "if the population is less than 100 would be taken all and if more than 100 then sample 10 can be taken -15% or 20-25% or more . But considering the sample is less than 100, it would take all the number of students VIII class. And the sample is 53 participants.

From this test, the researcher used it to know the validity and the reliability of the test as a research instrument before it was used to get the data. And the National Exam (UN) has been valid and reliable because from the central government.

In data collection, data collection procedure is done to determine the time when would be tested using National Exam (UN) problem and test done at the end of second semester of academic year 2017/2018, and the problem of National Exam (UN) was tested to the students of class VIII.

Firstly, the manuscript of the national exam text with four different manuscript samples. Secondly, after which it was distributed to all populations divided into two classes. Finally, after the script is done by students and the value of each student already exists, the value is obtained using the SPSS program.

The data analysis method is a process to clarify the specific result of research with particular technique. This is to answer the research questions. This includes determining how to assign numeric scores to the data, assessing the types of scores to use, selecting a statistical program, and inputting the data into a program, and then cleaning up the database for analysis (Creswell, 2012). As this research used quantitative method, the researcher made the results into a writing form that is easy to be understood and interpreted.

The researcher computed the data using electronic software for analysis (SPSS 22 program). The researcher calculated the level of student`s difficulties in reading competence in national exam using by the students at SMP N

2 Bantarkawung. According to Sheridan (2016) the scale scores can be divided into several intervals.

Findings and Discussion

The Students' Reading

Competence in SMP N 2

Bantarkawung in

the Academic year 2017/2018

This research purposed to find out reading competence at Public Junior High School of 2 Bantarkawung, reveal achievement of Public Junior High School of 2 Bantarkawung, and investigate the reading competence. Subjects in this study were students eight class at batch 2017/2018 amounted to 53 people.

The test consists of 50 multiple choice items. The scoring system used was that every correct answer, the score is two (2) points, and there was zero (0) point for incorrect answer. Therefore, the total score would be 100 points. The following is the table for students' score.

It is found that the average of students' score reading competence level was 71.66, and its high level. The value of 71.66 is obtained from the overall value of students divided by the population.

Based on the table, all of the students still was confused about reading comprehension. It was seen that there were 13 students who got very high scores because they could answer 81-100% of the test items. Then 29 students got high scores because they could answer 61-80% of the test items. Then 7 students who got moderate scores they just could answer 41-60% of the test items. Moreover, there were 4

students who got low scores they just could answer 21-40% of the test items.

Recently, the result of research question found that there were four students who had low level of reading competence, seven students who had moderate level of reading competence, twenty nine students who had high level of reading competence and thirteen who had very high level of reading competence. It can be identified that some of students have various level of reading competence such as very high, high, moderate and low level of reading competence.

From the means value, it is found that the average of students' reading competence level was 71.66. It was seen that there were 13 students who got very high scores because they could answer 81-100% of the test items. Then 29 students

got high scores because they could answer 61-80% of the test items. Then 7 students who got moderate scores they just could answer 41-60% of the test items. Moreover, there were 4 students who got low scores they just could answer 21-40% of the test items. It can be said that most of students at Public Junior High School of 2 Bantarkawung are in the high level of reading competence. It can be identified that there are some possible indicators that affected reading competence with the expectation of Grace and Emmanuel (2012), there were some categories of reading competences such as the non-readers who do not read for pleasure, the marginal readers who do reading for necessity, and the avid readers who love reading.

Furthermore, it shown that students' reading competence was

high level. They have high reading competence because there are some possible factors. According to literature review, the researcher investigated that they do reading for necessity. It was supported by Ochanya (2010) who claimed that the purpose of reading competence refers to concentration. It can be said that readers do reading for academic purpose because it provided a desire outcome. Then, students need to know their desire in reading skill which means that readers need to understand their personal feeling and have a good reading. This is in line with Wallace (1992), having good reading competence was depending on personal reason which provided reading for pleasure. Then, it can be said that students who have good reading, they have good feeling in reading.

In addition, readers who enjoy their reading would be easy to choose their own texts. They would choose text based on their preference with easy vocabulary. When readers are easy to choose their own text, it can motivate them to do reading in their leisure time. In accordance with Ögeyik and Akyay (2009), readers through reading competences can choose their reading texts. In choosing texts, readers are able to select depending on their preference.

Besides, the findings of students' reading competence are high level, which means that these results indicate that students have good reading competence. According to the literature review in chapter two, the researcher investigated that there are some characteristics of reading section in competence. First, the text was written in English language and there were unfamiliar

words. Students needed to comprehend the vocabulary that they found in every paragraph in reading section. Second, there were various types of text in reading section such as descriptive, narrative, and recount texts. Third, the context of the text was academic reading. This is in line with Gorelova, Zalyaeva and Sungatullina (2015) who stated that the texts in reading section of reading were divided into several types such as basic text and factual text. They also argued that students needed to master their vocabulary skill.

The Purpose for Reading

In time we read, we read for a variety purpose. We sometimes read to get the main idea but not much more (e.g., skimming a newspaper story), and sometimes we read to locate specific information (i.e., scanning for a name, date, or term).

Commonly we read text to learn information (i.e., reading to learn), and sometimes we are expected to synthesize information from multiple texts, or from a longer chapter or book, in order to take a critical position with respect to that information (i.e., reading to integrate and evaluate information). In academic setting, almost every major purpose for reading comes into play. Thus, an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) reading curriculum most must account for how students learn to read for multiple purposes, including at least the reading (Celce-Murcia, 2001:187).

According to Grabe and Stoller (2002:13), the purposes of reading are:

Reading to search for simple information and reading to skim. It is used so often in reading tasks that is probably best seen as a type of

reading ability. In reading to search for simple information is a common reading ability, though some researchers see it as a relatively independent cognitive process. It is used so often in reading tasks that is probably best seen as a type of reading ability. In reading to search, typically we scan the text for a specific piece of information or a specific word. Reading skim is a common part of many reading tasks and a useful skill in its own right. It involves, in essence, a combination of strategies for guessing where important information might be in the text until a general idea is formed.

Reading to learn from texts. It typically occurs in academic and professional contexts in which a person needs to learn a considerable amount of information from a text. Reading to learn is usually carried

out a reading rate somewhat than general reading comprehension.

Reading to integrate information, writes, and critique texts. Reading to integrate information requires additional decisions about the relative importance of complementary, mutually supporting or conflicting information and the likely restructuring of a rhetorical frame to accommodate information from multiple sources.

Reading for general comprehension. The notion of general reading comprehension has been intentionally saved for last in this discussion for two reasons. First, it is the most basic purposes for reading, underlying and supporting most other purposes for reading. Second, general reading comprehension is actually more complex than commonly assumed.

There are so many purposes in reading texts. Each person has his or her own purpose in reading texts. In this case, the writer is willing to help the students to reach their purpose in reading texts, especially the narrative one. Moreover, the research can be used by the English teacher to reach the purpose of teaching reading texts.

Reading Comprehension

The reading skills associated with the people's prosperities (Kumar, & Rani, 2016). According to Iftanti, (2015), The better the reading skills the communities possess, the better the economic lives they have. The better reading abilities also enable people becoming successful in their academic pursuit. Understanding the representation is comprehension. Successful reading requires competency in both decoding and comprehension. Because comprehension is a kind of mental activity, it is rather difficult to observe. In order to give the description of what comprehension is, the writer showed some definitions of comprehensions. Below are some statements about comprehension:

English reading comprehension level constitutes the higher level of reading skills. Students should be able to use their cognitive skill to comprehend the intertwined conditions between written and spoken communication in which factually these types of communication are different in nature from one to another (Oakhill, Cain, & Elbro, 2015:12). Comprehension proses is the result from three levels in representation of the text`s meaning (Griffiths, Sohlberg, and Biancarosa,

2011:89). Reading comprehension is a complex process that involves many different variables and factors (McKee, 2012). "We define reading comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (Snow, 2002:55). The writer implies that reading comprehension relates to the understanding and thinking process to get the meaning from reading materials.

Reading Competence Levels

Reading competency is the level of understanding a subject has achieved in regards to written text. Reading comprehension works together with writing comprehension as the two subjects work simultaneously with one another. Proficient reading competency includes the ability to quickly recognize and analyze words and understand the cognitive concepts behind the words. Vocabulary plays a significant part in reading competency as it allow for an expansion of terms in one's dialect and it assists with word and sound association.

(https://www.theclassroom.com/reading-writing-competencies-17564.html, 2nd februari 2019)

The taxonomy defines as either a classification or order. Here, Bloom's Taxonomy classifies the stages/levels of human's learning/thinking capability and suggests that learning involves active developments. However, after a half of century being basis of instructional design, in 2001, Bloom's Taxonomy was revised by Anderson and Kathworl

(Gunawan & Palupi, 2012). In the revision, Bloom's Taxonomy of cognitive domains are *remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating,* and *creating*.

Surjosuseno and Watts (1999:102) investigated critical reading levels based on Bloom's Taxonomy. The result, then, shows the application of Bloom's Taxonomy in a reading class. Bloom's Taxonomy provides a structured presentation of human cognition from low-level thought processes like simple recall to higher-order thinking skills like synthesis and evaluation:

Knowledge/remembering. In this stage, readers are expected to store a new knowledge from the text in their memories. After that, they have to be able to recall (remember) the content of

reading. This is the most basic stage from the taxonomy.

Comprehension/understanding. This phase requires readers to translate (if they are non-native speakers). Also, readers need to interpret, in order to configure the passage that is fitting with its context. Furthermore, readers need to make an extrapolation or judgment towards the meaning of the reading. Simply, this stage requires readers to predict the meaning towards the reading.

Application/applying. Applying means using the background knowledge/understanding into a situation. In reading comprehension, a reader needs to contextualize a reading text with their existing comprehension. After all, applying is the next phase after understanding a

knowledge in the Bloom's Taxonomy.

Analysis/analyzing. Analysis means to break apart a reading passage into several fundamental parts, for instance, the main idea, supporting details, type of paragraph, etc. Therefore, analyzing a text can be defined as understanding the paragraph organizational structure.

Evaluation/evaluating.

Evaluation deals not only with judging and valuing materials in the passage but also with the solution to the problem shown in the text / passages. Evaluating also includes checking and critiquing a text. Gunawan & Palupi, (2012).

Synthesis/creating.

Terminologically, synthesis means manufacturing in which consists of the process of recalling and comparing old ideas to be a new concept. In reading comprehension, synthesis can include problem solving activities toward the text. Here, readers are required to be creative. However, after the revision of Bloom's Taxonomy, according to Gunawan and Palupi (2012), synthesis becomes *creating* which requires learners to construct new ideas or create their own perspective writing.

Factors Influencing Reading Comprehension

Reading is one of the basic communicative skills, but it is a very complex process. In the process of reading, there are some factors, which influence reading comprehension. According to Nathan, Laurent, Sarah, Lee, Adam, and Nathasa, (2016) said that "Comprehension relies on

mastery of decoding; children who struggle to decode find it difficult to understand and remember what has been read. Because their efforts to grasp individual words are so exhausting, they have no resources left for understanding". The following are background experience, language abilities, thinking abilities, reading purposes, and affection (motivation, interest, attitude, belief, and feeling).

Background experience. The knowledge backgrounds and the past experiences of the students are very important in reading in order to anticipate the author's message. The ability to reconstruct meaning from printed page, including various kinds of skills and style the writer has, is based on the reader's previous experience with a topic, his familiarity with key concepts, and

his knowledge of how language works. In summary, readers must have ability to relate the text to their own background knowledge efficiently.

Language abilities. Reading and language are two things that cannot be separated because reading is one of the skills in learning a language. As a means of communication the expresses ideas, thought, opinions, and feelings. Language abilities refer to the abilities of students in using a language. It includes the ability to understand the structure underlying the passage and the vocabulary of the language.

Thinking abilities. Thinking abilities refer to the students ability to link their new experience with their previous one. In this case, readers should think the act of recognizing words, whereas, teachers

give the appropriate questions to help the students develop their thinking abilities.

Reading purposes. The purposes for reading are reading for information and reading for pleasure. It is important to judge the purpose of reading because it will influence us in choosing the technique.

Affection. Motivation, interest, belief, and feelings belong to affection. They may have improved the influence on students reading comprehension.

The researcher assumes that motivation is one of the important factors towards reading comprehension, because students learn to read and to read better by reading. Their reading will tend to be effective when they have a motivation to learn first.

Conclusion

Based on the background of the study reading does not only need ability in memorizing and remembering, but also ability in understanding about what the students read and following the author's mind and reading was also something crucial and indispensable for the students because the success of their study depends on the greater part of their ability to read. Most students could not understand a passage of the reading text, especially in vocabulary, reading competence and grammatical structure so that they got difficulties and low score in reading. Most of the students have difficulty to understand the text and to pronounce the word of the text. Most of students were not interested in reading activity. So the research question was answer the problem: "How is the students' reading competence in

Public Junior High School of 2 Bantarkawung?" The researcher used questions of final examination to find out the value obtained by students and looking for the new methodology to study about reading comprehension and should be known in discussion on the previous explanation, the writer concluded that the students' reading competence was "high", which could be seen from the mean of the students' competence that was 71.66, which meant that the average of the students could answer 61-80% of the items of the test correctly. It can be said that most of students at Public High Junior School of 2 Bantarkawung were in the high level of reading competence.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher realize that there were many things that need to be explored in young learner's teaching and learning process. Thus the researcher proposes several recommendation. Hopefully, these following recommendation would enhance knowledge for the program of teaching English for students.

For teacher, Based on the results of the study that there were some students who make mistake in reading comprehension because they still feel less understanding of reading competence. So, the teacher should provide more explanation in reading competence and create good conditions to make them happier, easier, and fun to learn in the class.

For students, Based on the results, the students already understand that reading competence was proven at a high level, students were relevant due to keep ready, students can maintain that value by self-learning and spend more time practicing,

memorizing and paying attention to maintain their skills in reading comprehension and learning by doing exercise.

References

Alexander, H. 1962. *The Story of Our Language*. New York: Dolphin Books

Anna Wuryani (2016) Studied *"The effects of reading techniques to develop reading ability in SMP Muhammadiyah Kasihan"*

Arikunto, Suharsimi, 2002. *Prosedur Penelitian Suatu Pendekatan Praktek*. Jakarta. PT. Rineka Cipta.

Arikunto, S. 2010. *Prosedur Penelitian Suatu Pendekatan Praktik*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta

Arikunto, S. 2011. *Prosedur Penelitian Suatu Pendekatan Praktik*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta

Carnine, Douglas; Silbert, Jerry; Kameenui, Edward.J. 1990. *Direct Instruction reading (Second Edition)*. New York: Merill Publishing.

Celce-Murcia, Marianne, *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, USA: Heinle&Heinle,2001.

Daeng, Hans J. 2012. *Manusia, Kebudayaan, dan Lingkungan*. Yogyakarta : Pustaka Pelajar.

Didit Nur Yulianto (2016) Studied *"The Students` Reading Comprehension Difficulties and Strategies at English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta"*

Faristiana (2008). *The Use of Cloze Procedure in Teaching Written Narrative to the First Grade Students of SMA Negeri 2 Semarang in the Academic Year 2007/2008.*

Grabe, William and Fredericka L. Stoller. 2011. *Teaching and Researching Reading*. New York: Pearson Education Limited

Harris. A, dan Sipay, E. 1980. *How to Increase Reading Ability*. New York: Longman, Inc.

Krisha (2009) studied *The Use of Folktales as an Alternative Material in Teaching Extensive Reading (An Experimental study of the English Grade Students of SMP Negeri 1 Batang in the academic year of 2008/2009).*

Mujiburrohman M, (2013) studied *A Study on The Students' Reading Competence in Using Recount Text (At the Ninth Grade Students of SMP Bustanul Ulum Bantarkawung Brebes in the Academic Year 2012/2013).*

Ögeyik, M. C. & Akyay, E. (2009). Investigating reading habits and preferences of student teachers at foreign language departments. *The International Journal of Language Society and Culture*, (28), 72-78. [Online] Available: http://www.educ.utas.edu.au/users/tle/JOURNAL/issues/2009/28-7.pdf (Oct 10, 2018)

Pandey, J Eds. *Handbook of Cross Cultural Psychology Social Behavior and Application* Vol. 3, 77-113. Amerika: Allyn & Bacon.

Pasaribu, I.L. & Simanjuntak, B., 1982, *Pendidikan Nasional (Tinjauan Paedagogik Teoritis)*, Bandung: Tarsito

Rosemary Ochanya Ogbodo PhD, "Effective Study Habits in Educational Sector: Counselling Implications", *Edo Journal of Counseling*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2010, 232-233

Schwartz, Shalom H., Smith, P., 1996. *Values* dalam Berry, J. W., Poortinga, Y. H.,

Septi (2009) studied *The Use of Short Stories to Develop Student's Reading Comprehension Skill (An Experimental Study of the Eight Grade Students of SMP Negeri 4 Jepara in the Academic Year of 2008/2009).*

Soedarso. 2004. *Speed Reading*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama

Sugiyono. 2014. *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.

Wallace, C. (1992). *Reading*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Y.N. Gorelova, E.O. Zalyaeva, D.D. Sungatullina, 2015. Building Research Competence of Graduate Students by Means of Teaching English for Academic Purposes [Online] Available: http://www.mcser.org/journal/index.php/mjss/article/view/5732 (Oct 10, 2018).