Students' Difficulties in Reading Short Stories at Junior High School Wawonii Tenggara

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate several issues captured by the students in relation to language barrier in reading short stories at Wawonii Southeast High School. This research applied qualitative research design. The population of this study was an 8th grade high school student at Wawonii Southeast, and a sample was taken using random sampling consisting of 5 students. The research instrument used to collect the data was semi-structured interview. To analyze data, researchers use data condensation techniques, data display, and drawing conclusions. The results of this study reveal that there are some difficulties students have in reading short stories: the difficulties to understand the word or vocabulary, discourse (long distance), lack of main idea comprehension, and students' efforts to overcome reading difficulties.

***Keywords:** Students Difficulties, Reading, Short Stories.*

1. Introduction

Reading comprehension skills are a process carried out by readers to obtain information and know the meaning contained in a text. To improve students' understanding of reading skills, students need strategies or methods for that are suitable for use. One of the effective methods in developing students' reading comprehension is short stories because stories are considered as a unique literary genre that can be easily used by teachers in developing reading comprehension skills (Ahmad, 2012). Pourkalhor and Kohan (2013) suggest that the use of short stories makes students feel more relaxed and facilitates reading comprehension. In addition, the use of student short stories requires or requires more attention in order to develop students' thinking skills. In addition, Erkaya (2003) mentions that every short story usually has a beginning, middle, and end. It can motivate and encourage every student in the class to continue reading or understanding the contents of the short story.

Short stories are widely used by English teachers to find out the extent of students' knowledge of English. However, it cannot be denied that there are still many students who experience reading difficulties, for example the problem is caused by having a great sense of laziness, not being interested in reading, and difficulty in pronouncing. There are still many students who do not understand the text, other things are caused by teachers who do not have the right learning techniques or methods can encourage the improvement of students' reading skills (Amalia, 2019).

Reading short stories are one of the skills that must be possessed by students in learning. Reading skill is something that is very useful for students who like reading. Through these skills, students feel free to discover and engage in a learning process general and language learning. Short stories consider a suitable tool for building critical thinking skills for students (Khatib & Mehrgan, 2012). This is like students being able to understand reading sentences, paragraphs and even text from the learning material being studied (Amalia, 2019). One of the media that can be used to improve students' reading skills is short story media.

Based on through interview made by researcher on October 20th, 2022, towards students of Junior High School Southeast Wawonii, there are still some students who experience difficulties reading short stories in class, such as not understanding the vocabulary in the reading. This is in line with Rosita & Karman's research (2019), that there were some students who had reading difficulties due to a lack of reading comprehension and a lack of interest in reading. Meanwhile, research conducted by Mohammed (2021) shows that students' lack of vocabulary makes it difficult for them to answer questions properly and correctly. In other words, students' difficulties in reading short stories generally lie in their lack of vocabulary mastery. However, most of the previous research subjects were students of Palopo High School and the University of Debrecen. Meanwhile, the school that became the location of this research will be Junior High School Wawonii Tenggara. Therefore, researcher wants to look further at the differences in research results at different levels.

Knowing the difficulties students experience when reading a short story in English, is beneficial for teacher, because it can form the basis for teachers to plan strategies or techniques that are most suitable of efficient for teaching their students. When the teacher already knows the difficulties that make students feel difficulty in reading short stories in English, the teacher can provide story text that is easy to understand. In this regard, the researcher is interested to find out students' difficulties in reading short stories in SMPN 04 Southeast Wawonii.

2. Method

This research employed qualitative design. In this study, the researcher involved 5 students of Junior High School Wawonii Tenggara Class VIII through purposive sampling by obtaining direct recommendations from the teacher who taught that class, where the teacher already knew the students who had difficulty when reading the short stories. In this case, it is also in accordance with the opinion of Sugiyono (2012), who said that purposive sampling is a technique for collecting participants with certain considerations. For example, consideration to know best about what we expect from studens who have difficulty reading.

This research used in-depth interview as an instrument and to collect data. According to, Dörnyei, (2007) argues that interviews are data collection techniques that can be carried out directly or indirectly with each study participant. Therefore, the researcher who used qualitative design requires accurate information to get information. Before conducting an interview session, the researcher first explains the purpose of the

interview is held. Then given questions related to research, namely, to find out what factors affect the difficulties of students in reading short stories at the Junior High School Southeast Wawonii. The researcher interviewed the research participant using semi-structured questions to find out students' difficulties in reading and understanding short stories. The purpose of the research using semi-structured questions is so that the information needed can be obtained in detail and more openly and there is reciprocity between the interviewer and the informant in expressing their opinion on the issues discussed. The researcher conducted interview using Indonesian language in order to make students get easier to answer the questions being asked. The lists of interview questions were adapted and modified from Firdiansyah's (2022) interview asked. The reason is that this research has a topic similar to the research, not all of the questions from interviews used in this study. Several modifications were made to suit the context and purpose of this study. The list of questions can be seen on the attachment sheet.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data in this study. Qualitative semi-structured interview was one of the dominant and most widely used (Bradford & Cullen, 2012). During the interview, the participant has the right to answer what was on the participants mind and asked new questions after receiving the participants answer. This was in line with (Choak 2012), who usually used talk shows that allow researchers to discuss specifics while participants can respond on their own terms and discuss related topics to be developed during the interview.

According to Miles, et al (2014), data analysis technique of qualitative is inductive, namely analysis based on the data obtained, then a certain relationship pattern is developed or becomes a hypothesis, then the data is searched again based on the hypothesis and again until found. Firstly, Performing data reduction means, in this case, summarizing, sorting out the main things, focusing on only the important things, and then looking for themes and patterns in these things. So that the data has been reduced, it has been able to provide an overview of the data and make it easier for researcher to collect research data. By doing data reduction, the research results were simpler and easier to understand. After reduction, the next step was to present the data with narrative text. This was most often done in qualitative research. By displaying the data, it would make it easier to understand the problems being discussed and plan further work based on the results that have been understood. The final step in the analysis of the data was to conclude the data and then verify the data. The hope of this conclusion was that, in answering the problem formulation in the introduction section, sometimes it can also not answer the problem formulation. This was because the formulation of the problem was temporary, so it was possible that it would develop after the researcher was in the research field. If the conclusions expressed in the first stage were supported by true and consistent evidence when the researcher returned to the field to collect data, then the conclusions from the research are credible. In this case, it can be trusted and quality. For the purpose of data analysis and maintaining the confidentiality of student respondents, the researcher used pseudonyms, referring to students in terms of S1 for the first student, S2 for the second student, S3 for the third student while S4 for the fourth student and S5 for the fifth student.

3. Results

After conducting the research, the researcher analyzed the results of the interviews that had been described, the researcher also found three difficulties in reading short

stories, namely: the difficulties in understanding the words, discourse (long sentence), and lack of comprehension of the main idea.

3.1. Findings

The following is a detailed explanation of the findings from each aspect which was explained as follows:

1. The Difficulties to Understand the Word (Vocabulary)

The students are not capable to determine the meaning of words in the text of story. Moreover, the students difficult understand the context of reading text. This can be interpreted that they are experiencing difficulties when reading the text. The difficulty can be seen in the incompetence students answering question about the information from the text of short stories. Inclined students guess the answer, when they do not understand the meaning of words at the text. Based on the results of the interviews, three students argued that they had difficulty in understanding the meaning of words in the text of short stories. This is based on several statements of students' participant:

S1: *Iya, hmmm **saya tidak memahami kata yang ada dalam cerita** yang saya baca yang berbahasa Inggris, karena terlalu sulit bagi saya.* "Yes, hmmm I do not understand the word that I read in English, because it is too hard for me".

S2: *Iya ada, **saya tidak mengerti kosa katanya dalam cerita** apalagi ceritanya berbahasa Inggris jadi bagi saya sangat sulit untuk membacanya.* "Yes, there is. I do not understand the vocabulary in the story especially the story is in English so it is very difficult for me to read.

S5: ***Saya Susah mengerti apa maksudnya itu cerita, karena diabahasa inggris semua.*** "I find it difficult to understand what the story means, because all of it is in English".

To sum up, the three participating students have reached a conclusion in the understanding the meaning of words from the short story they read. According to them, the difficulties arise because they rarely reading short story text in English.

2. The Difficulties to Understand discourse (Long Sentence)

The lack of English vocabulary is one of the factors in comprehending the long sentences in the text. Besides, students realize that their problem in understanding the text because English is very difficult to read and has complicated structure for students to understand. Therefore, students think that they cannot understand long sentences because they have a limited vocabulary. This is in accordance with the results of research conducted by Firdiansyah (2022) that students have difficulty in understanding long sentences in English because their mastery of English vocabulary is still inconsiderable. It is supported by statements from some students as a sample as follows:

S1: *Iya ada **sebagian kata yang saya tidak tahu dalam membaca cerita pendek** karena, setiap kata yang berbahasa Inggris saya tidak tahu dan saya juga tidak memahami kalimat yang terlalu panjang karena **saya kurang kosakata jadi saya tidak memahami kalimat yang terlalu Panjang**.* "Yes, there are some words that I donot know in reading short stories because every word in English I do not know

and I also donot understand the sentences that are too long because my lack vocabulary so I donot understand sentences that are too long".

S2: *Saya sulit memahami kata karena saya susah menyebutkan teks bacaan apalagi bacaannya dalam bahasa Inggris. Saya juga susah untuk mengerti kalimatnya yang terlalu Panjang.* "I find it difficult to understand words because I find it difficult to mention the text, let alone read in English. I also find it difficult to understand the sentences too long".

S3: *Saya sulit memahami kata karena menurut* **saya susah di ucapkan dalam bahasa Inggris** *apalagi membaca kalimat yang panjang dalam bahasa Inggris saya pasti kesusahan apalagi mau dipahami artinya.* "I find it difficult in understand words because I think it is difficult to pronounce in English let alone read long sentences in English, I must have difficulty let alone want to understand the meaning"

Based on the statement above, it can be concluded that students have a huge issue in understanding long English sentences. It is influenced by the limited vocabulary of students find it difficult to read sentences in English because they are not familiar with English.

Besides, two other students argued that they were having those same difficulties, since they do not catch the meaning of several English words in sentences. Based on the explanation above is accordance with the statements of both students below:

S4: *Saya kesulitan dalam memahami kata karena kata itu baru saya temukan atau bacaannya yang susah dibaca sehingga* **saya tidak dapat memahaminya dan saya juga tidak mengerti kalimat yang panjang** *karena saya belum mengetahui sebagian arti dalam kalimat tersebut. Kalau untuk ide utama pasti saya sudah memahaminya karena ada sedikit kosakata yang saya tahu.* "I had difficulty in understanding the word because I had just found the word or the reading was difficult to read so I could not understand it and I also did not understand long sentences because I did not know some of the meaning in the sentence. As for the main idea, I must have understood it because there is little vocabulary that I know".

S5: *Seperti yang saya jelaskan tadi,* **saya susah mengerti maksudnya**. *Contohnya seperti banyak kosa katanya yang saya tidak tahu artinya, jadi hal itulah yang membuat* **saya kesusahan untuk mengartikan ceritanya**. "As I explained before, I have a hard time understanding the point. For example, there is a lot of vocabulary that I do not know the meaning of, so that's why makes it difficult for me to interpret the story".

3. Lack of Main Idea Comprehension

The language barrier which meet the students is almost all of them do not figure out the essence of the short stories given by the teacher, it is the effect of having a few vocabulary stocks, it is followed by the ignorance of understanding a long sentence even a discourse. This issue arises when students are stimulated by the teacher in reading the text. Students found it difficult since the form of the story given is complex and they feel inadequate in learning English subject. As the capable teachers, they have to be more skillful in teaching English, especially reading subject since it is one of the skills which may

build and elevate knowledge skills. In reading, there are reading techniques used by the students in finding the main ideas in reading text, they are skimming and scanning techniques. However, students' difficulties in this case are finding the main idea of the topic, when students read the text, they too focused on translating one by one the words in the reading, so they miss the main idea (Hidayati, 2018). A student stated that she was difficult for her to find out the main idea of the text; she found it difficult to read the text, let a long to understand the main idea. This expression is in accordance with the student's answer during interview:

> **S3:** *Saya sulit memahami kata* karena menurut saya susah di ucapkan dalam bahasa Inggris *apalagi membaca kalimat yang panjang dalam bahasa Inggris* saya pasti kesusahan apalagi mau dipahami ide pokoknya. "I find it difficult to understand the word because I think it is difficult to pronounce it in English, let alone read long sentences in English, I must have difficulty especially wanting to understand the main idea".

One of the other students also commented that he was able to understand the main ideas in reading text because he had sufficient vocabulary. However, sometimes he finds it difficult to get the main idea when he gets new vocabulary or does not know the meaning of the vocabulary such as the statement of student as follows:

> **S4:** *Saya kesulitan dalam memahami kata* karena kata itu baru saya temukan atau bacaannya yang susah dibaca sehingga saya tidak dapat memahaminya dan saya juga tidak mengerti kalimat yang panjang karena saya belum mengetahui sebagian arti dalam kalimat tersebut. Kalau untuk ide utama saya sedikit memahaminya karena saya memiliki kosakata yang bias dibilang cukup. "I had difficulty in understanding the word because I had just found the word or the reading was difficult to read so I could not understand it and I also did not understand long sentences because I did not know some of the meaning in the sentence. As for the main idea, I understand it a little bit because I have a vocabulary that can be said to be enough".

Based on the statements above, it can be concluded that students found the difficulty to read and understand the main ideas of the reading text since they lack vocabulary and are not accustomed to pronouncing English words and sentences.

4. Students' Efforts to Overcome Reading Difficulties

When students experience difficulties, they have certain ways of reducing the difficulties they face when reading short stories. There are several ways to solve their difficulties, such as asking the teacher's assistant, asking for help to the classmate, checking the words into the dictionary, and translating the words via Google translate App. They do this way in order to they do not spend a lot of times and can also answer the teacher questions quickly. Based on the results of the interviews, the fifth of student participants had the same ways of solving the difficulties they encountered while reading the text. This explanation is supported by the answers of the participating students when interviewed by the following researcher:

> **S1***: Iya ada cara bagi saya, saya menanyakannya kepada guru atau mencari di kamus bahasa Inggris, supaya saya tahu artinya dan bacaanya. "Yes, there is a way for

me, I ask the teacher or look it up in the English dictionary, so that I know the meaning and read it".

S2: *Saya akan mencari artinya di kamus bahasa Inggris atau saya juga bertanya kepada teman atau kakak kelas saya yang mengerti bahasa Inggris.* "I will look up the meaning in the English dictionary or I will also ask my friends or upperclassmen who understand English."

S3: ***ketika saya merasa kesulitan dalam membaca cerita*** *saya akan membuka kamus bahasa Inggris, kemudian saya caritahu arti kata yang ada dalam teks supaya saya mengetahui apa artinya.* "When I find it difficult to read a story I will open the English dictionary, then I find out the meaning of the word in the text so that I know what it means".

S4: ***Ketika saya kesulitan dalam membaca cerita pendek*** *saya akan bertanya kepada teman atau guru yang lancer dalam berbahasa Inggris. Dan saya juga akan membuka google translate bahasa Inggris bagaimana cara mengucapkan setiap kata yang berbahasa Inggris.* "When I have difficulty in reading short stories, I will ask friends or teachers who are fluent in English. And I will also open the google translate En glish how to pronounce every word made from English".

S5*: jika saya tidak tahu artinya, biasanya saya bertanya kepada teman kelasku, biasa juga saya membuka kamus di google.*"If I do not know the meaning, I usually ask my classmates, I also usually open the dictionary on google"

3.2. Discussion

1.   The Difficulties to Understand the Word/Vocabulary

Based on the findings, most students still experience difficulties in understanding words/vocabulary when students read short stories. This is in line with Wallace (2007) who says that vocabulary has important key in learning English. Therefore, vocabulary mastery is one of them the main component and very important to develop students' vocabulary skills. Student can use the vocabulary as they listen, speak, read and write. Students learn vocabulary directly and indirectly. They can express their ideas and understand the ideas of others if they have a lot of vocabulary mastery. According to Thornbury (2002), learning Vocabulary means the same as learning to convey new information into existing systems, namely communication. So, when students do not understand vocabulary, it will make some students understand the content of short story reading.

2.   The Difficulties to Understand Long Sentence

The researcher found that most of the participating students still did not understand long sentences in short stories. This research relates to the statement of Lustyantie (2015) which argues that long sentences are the main elements that cause difficulties in reading activities. Therefore, long sentences can be used as a measure of the readability of discourse, and rightly so usually used as main points in readability formulas. Students also have difficulty understanding long sentences due to their lack of vocabulary. Students can understand simple words or sentences, but students have difficulty understanding sentences that are too long. Sentence form is influenced by more than just

grammar it can also be influenced by style and rhythm. Some long sentence structures can be used in effective academic writing. Excessive sentences can be frustrating for the reader, if but too many concise sentences can overwhelm a text sound disjointed and not in accordance with the core reading of the story (Al-Seghayer 2014).

3. Not Understand the Main Idea.

From the results of the interviews, it was found that there were still students who had difficulty and did not understand the main ideas in reading the text. Reading is one of the four English skills that must be mastered by everyone want to learn English. Reading can also open one's mind to get a lot of information, knowledge, and reading also provides entertainment, especially for students who still need to develop their experience. According to Afflerbach (2007) stated that reading is something dynamic or complex a process that involves skills, strategies, and prior knowledge. Students must have a strategy to get the main idea in the text because the main idea is the main key in the text.

4. Students' Efforts to Overcome Reading Difficulties

In the process of learning English, the students certainly have experienced a difficulty when learning. These difficulties can lead to less-than-optimal student learning outcomes. There are 3 elements that are always an obstacle for students when reading short stories in English, these elements are pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar (Megawati, 2016). Very important in developing a vocabulary because there are differences between sounds that combine to form words. If students are used to mispronouncing words, there is a tendency for students not to be able to provide clear information (Sofiyanti, 2014). One of the things that are important for every student to master because when there is a lack of vocabulary; students will find it difficult to answer questions properly and correctly (Mohammed 2021) the rule for arranging words into appropriate sentences. Because each region has a different language structure, this affects students when learning English because they are already familiar with their respective regional languages. However, it cannot be denied that there are still many students who have difficulty reading, this is because they have a great sense of laziness, are not interested in reading, have difficulty in pronouncing, there are still many students who do not understand the text. Another thing is that teachers do not have the right learning techniques or methods that can encourage students' reading skills to improve (Amalia, 2019). Thus, students have certain small ways to ease their difficulties in capturing and understanding the contents of the reading text. Such as asking teachers, peers, opening a dictionary and translating Google translate. This was done by the participating students to solve their problems quickly so that their reading process was completed quickly, and they could answer the teacher's questions easily.

Based on the explanation above, it is not clear that the difficulties students experience in reading short stories can be influenced by several things, namely The Difficulties to Understand the Word/Vocabulary, The Difficulties to Understand Long Sentence and Not Understand the Main Idea. In these difficulties really happened at Junior High School Southeast Wawonii. The researcher also found that students have a way to overcome difficulties when they read short stories..

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings presented above, the researchers eventually found that there are some difficult items that the students do in reading comprehension, namely, the difficulty in understanding the meaning of words, discourse (long sentences), lack of main idea comprehension, and their effort in minimizing the reading difficulties.

The results of this study are important information in learning English, and it is hoped that they can also be applied in learning methods and academics must even have an effective way of learning and improve students' English level. In addition, this study also provides evidence that reading teaching strategies should focus on how to teach students to understand the main idea and read quickly. Therefore, this study not only reveals students' difficulties in reading but also how teachers should adjust their teaching methods to help students master reading comprehension, especially short stories.

There are limitations during completing this research. The answers given by several students were very short, so the researcher had to complete many answers for each of the five students. The researcher asked the students to conduct interviews. During English class hours, the researcher conducted interviews with the five participants which were very limited and had to be accelerated.

As recommendation, teachers should pay attention to students who have difficulty reading short stories. The teacher must have a way of teaching so that students do not find it difficult in the text, after that, the teacher must also encourage students so that students improve their learning, especially how their reading improves.

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