

TEACHERS' DIFFICULTIES IN TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION OF THE SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS

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Abstract

This article was conducted to find out the teachers' difficulties in teaching reading comprehension of the seventh-grade students at SMPN 22 Palembang. The research design used in this study was descriptive qualitative method. The participants in this study were two English language teachers who teach in grade seventh at SMPN 22 Palembang. The data were collected using a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions. Then, data from interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis in this study as part of the analysis. After analyzing the data, the findings showed that there are five difficulties that teachers face when teaching reading comprehension in seventh grade students at SMPN 22 Palembang, as follows: (1) students' lack of motivation, (2) limited instructional time, (3) lack of background knowledge (4) students' limited vocabulary, and (5) lesson plan constraints. Therefore, this research discusses the difficulties experienced by English teachers in seventh grade, thus it is hoped that readers especially English teachers who experienced similar difficulties can use this research to increase their variety of learning activities and overcome the difficulties they are faced.

Keywords: *teachers' difficulties, teaching reading comprehension*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the very important skills in learning language to seek information and to gain knowledge. According to Nisa et al (2018), reading is seen as an interactive process between the reader and the texts that leads to fluency in reading. It means reading is the process of understanding the meaning of a text where from what has been read, the reader can get important ideas and information. Abdurrahman (2014) stated that reading ability is the basis for mastering the field of study. Children will experience many difficulties in learning the field of study in the following classes if they do not immediately have the ability to read. Therefore, children must learn to read so that they can read to learn.

Although reading comprehension is important for students, there are difficulties students face in reading comprehension. Silfia et al., (2016) identified a number of factors that made it difficult for most students to read, namely identifying topics, main ideas, word meanings, references and inference, communicative purposes, linguistic aspect, and generic structures of the text.

Teaching reading is a way of transferring knowledge using material and certain technical strategies to master reading itself, which is carried out by the teacher to students. It is difficult to teach reading to English learners because so many teachers are not proficient enough in the language they use for instruction. Sentsho (2000) as cited in Moswane (2019),

many teachers are imperfect in teaching reading, therefore this imperfection has a negative impact on student outcomes. If the basic structure is not able to be used correctly by the teacher, or if the pronunciation is bad so that the teacher's words are difficulties to understand, then the teacher will not be able to teach the language competently.

The ability to read is important if students are to succeed in school. In fact, understanding of everything that is learned at school depends on the good reading ability of students. According to Ampofo (2019), if children do not begin to learn read, write, understand and use language to communicate their ideas and perspectives, then the conditions for a profitable and worthwhile life will be severely disrupted. However, this reading comprehension is quite difficult for students to achieve. This is related to the way the teacher teaches reading comprehension itself. Thus, this study aimed at exploring factors that contribute to the difficulties faced by teachers in teaching reading comprehension.

Based on the observation at SMPN 22 Palembang, researcher found that the students had difficulties in reading comprehension. Moreover, in informal interview with the English teachers at SMPN 22 Palembang in August 2022, researcher found that the teachers had difficulties in teaching reading comprehension, especially seventh grade teachers. Whereas reading comprehension is a very important foundation for students to get information related to reading texts. The foundation of a good reading skills for students are expected to be prepared by English teachers. This is a challenge for English teachers in teaching reading comprehension for Junior High School students.

Some previous research by Afriani (2021) showed that a significant problem faced by English teachers when teaching online was that students were often slow in responding to the process of learning activities carried out online. Furthermore, Dhasmara (2020) showed that is identified a number of factors that contributed to differences in reading comprehension between students in urban and rural areas, namely student interest, motivation, teaching methods, reading material, vocabulary mastery, and culture.

In light of the details provided, the researcher expresses a keen interest in conducting a study titled "Teachers' Difficulties in Teaching Reading Comprehension of the Seventh Grade Students at SMPN 22 Palembang." This research initiative aims to delve into the challenges faced by educators when instructing reading comprehension to seventh-grade students specifically at SMPN 22 Palembang.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses descriptive qualitative method. According to Cresswell (2012), qualitative research is the form of study that seeks to discover, characterize, and explain the quality or characteristics of social impacts that cannot be explained, quantified, or defined using a quantitative method to numerical calculations. This descriptive qualitative research aims to find out what difficulties teachers experience in teaching reading comprehension at seventh grade of junior high school. The descriptive qualitative also helps in providing a

more comprehensive and detailed description of the phenomena experienced by the informants, so that answers and solutions to the problems studied will be found.

Participants in this study were determined using the Purposeful Sampling Technique Winarni (2018) states that this technique focuses on the specific purpose of the research to be carried out, namely the researcher chooses the characteristics that participants must possess. It is an English teacher who has taught at least 5 years and teaches in grade seventh. The researcher chose two English teacher.

In collecting data using interview technique, the researcher selected 2 English teacher who taught seventh grade students at SMPN 22 Palembang. Researcher conducted a semi-structure interview. Then, the researcher organizes the information and the data. Next, the researcher read and analyses the data that had been transcribed. In the technique of collecting data through interviews, researchers do it face-to-face.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) Thematic analysis aims to identify patterns or find themes through data that has been collected by researcher. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the following are the stages in thematic analysis: (1) familiarizing the data; (2) coding; (3) generating themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining themes; (6) make a report. In the first step, the researcher gets an overview of all the data by reading the data repeatedly. The second step, the researcher coded the data obtained from the interview. Third step, the researcher re-analyzed the data based on the code to find out the themes. It is patterns that include information about the data that is relevant to the research questions. Next, reviewing themes. After making the themes, the researcher checked it. Not only reviewing themes but also modifying and developing themes is necessary to ensure the data from each theme supports the themes. After that, defining themes. The themes that the researcher made were redefined and renamed to be more understandable. The last step is made a report. The researcher created an explanation of the research result.

RESULT/FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the interview data, the researcher discovered some difficulties that teachers faced when teaching reading comprehension of the seventh grade. The following were the themes and code analyses obtained from the qualitative data provided by interview:

Table.1. Themes and codes pertaining to teachers' challenges in instructing reading comprehension to seventh-grade students.

| No | Themes | Codes |
|----|------------------------------|--|
| 1. | Students' Lack of Motivation | A. The teacher clarified that students were struggling with understanding the meaning of the English text content, making the overall reading experience quite tedious for them. B. The teacher mentioned that students |

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| | | tend to favor reading fiction texts in Indonesian, such as novels and comics. |
| | | C. The teacher clarified that students encounter confusion when translating words found in the English reading text. |
| 2. | Limited instructional time | <p>A. The teacher said that reading comprehension takes a lot of time, therefore students understand the contents of the text.</p> <p>B. The teacher explained that training students in recognizing certain words or letters in a text takes a lot of time</p> <p>C. The teacher stated that learning time is affected by unexpected things (such as: technical problem when presenting supplementary material, students' mood swings, and urgent things that teachers do.</p> |
| 3. | Lack of background knowledge | The teacher explains that from grades 1-6 students are not familiar with English subjects. |
| 4. | Students' Limited Vocabulary | The teacher said that the limited vocabulary of students hinders learning in reading comprehension. |
| 5. | Lesson Plan Constraints | <p>A. The teacher said that the lesson plans that had been prepared were constrained because of the students' mood swings.</p> <p>B. The teacher said the problem is that sometimes it doesn't match with the schedule they have made.</p> <p>C. The teacher stated that urgent teacher training or meetings affect the lesson plans that have been mad.</p> |

Table 1 is about *Themes and codes of teachers' challenges in instructing reading comprehension to seventh-grade students* contains themes and codes derived from qualitative data and discusses and understanding of the difficulties faced by teachers when teaching reading comprehension of the seventh-grade students at SMPN 22 Palembang. It was divided into five difficulties: (1) Lack of motivation; (2) Limited instructional time; (3) Lack of background knowledge; (4) Students' Limited Vocabulary; (5) Lesson plan constraints.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study indicate that English teachers at the seventh-grade level in SMPN 22 Palembang grapple with significant challenges in teaching reading comprehension.

These challenges encompass a variety of issues that impact the effectiveness of instruction. One notable difficulty is the observed lack of motivation among seventh-grade students. This lack of enthusiasm adversely affects student engagement with reading comprehension materials, posing a barrier to effective teaching.

Teachers also face constraints related to limited instructional time. The challenge lies in covering the reading comprehension curriculum thoroughly within the allotted time, potentially compromising the depth and quality of instruction. Insufficient background knowledge among students emerged as another significant challenge. This limitation hampers their ability to comprehend English reading materials, underscoring the importance of addressing foundational knowledge gaps.

A prevalent issue identified is the students' restricted vocabulary, which hinders their capacity to understand the nuances and meanings embedded in English texts. This vocabulary limitation presents a direct challenge to effective reading comprehension. Furthermore, the study revealed constraints associated with lesson planning. Teachers encounter challenges in designing and implementing comprehensive lesson plans that can effectively address the diverse needs and challenges presented by seventh-grade students in the context of reading comprehension.

In summary, these difficulties collectively highlight the complex nature of the challenges faced by English teachers at SMPN 22 Palembang when teaching reading comprehension to seventh-grade students. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach, encompassing strategies to enhance student motivation, optimize instructional time, bridge knowledge gaps, expand vocabulary, and overcome constraints in lesson planning.

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