

THESIS ARTICLE

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION ACHIEVEMENT AT SMPN 12 JEMBER

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Abstract

This research was intended to describe the seventh grade students' reading comprehension achievement especially in reading descriptive texts at SMPN 12 Jember. Hence, this research used descriptive study as the research design. There were two reading indicators in this research, namely identifying main ideas and identifying supporting details. The research subjects in this research were determined by using cluster random sampling by lottery because each class had the similar capability that can be seen from the mean score of the previous English score. The data of the research were collected from reading comprehension test, interview and documentation. Further, the data of the research was calculated by using descriptive statistic in the form of percentage. The result of the analysis of the research showed that most of the seventh grade students' reading comprehension achievement at SMPN 12 Jember was classified as good with the mean score of their reading comprehension achievement was 70. It means that 70% of the seventh grade students in general got the score between 70 – 80 in reading descriptive text. However, they were some students still had not achieved the standard minimum score which was 70. Dealing with the result of the research indicators, it was found that the seventh grade students' ability in identifying supporting details was categorized as "good" with the percentage was 76.09%. Furthermore, the students' ability in identifying main idea was 58.69% which was categorized as "poor".

Keywords: *A Descriptive Study, Reading Comprehension Achievement, Descriptive Text*

Introduction

Learning English as a new language is usually divided into four large domains (language skills), namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Canal and Swain in Lems et.al 2010: 5). One of those four English language skills, reading is regarded as the most important skill for many students in English Language Teaching (ELT). According to 2006 Institutional Level Curriculum (KTSP) (2006: 227) for junior high school students, one of the four English skills that the students should be able to master was reading skill. It was because reading can help to develop other skills. Therefore, the students were expected to be able to understand what they are reading in their daily life. Williams (1984: 2) defines reading as a process whereby one looks at and understands what has been written. In other words, reading is a process of getting the idea or the meaning from written text.

Reading a text always relates to comprehension. McMeans (2004: 2) states that reading comprehension means the act of making sense out of what you read. In other words, reading comprehension is the activity to elaborate the content of the text which has been read by someone. In addition, reading for comprehension is the

primary purpose for reading; raising student awareness of main ideas in a text and exploring the organization of a text are essential for good comprehension (Grabe in Richards and Renandya, 2002: 277). It means that the students' should be able to know the main idea and the organization of the text to comprehend what they read.

There were some researches about reading comprehension achievement, Fatiyah (2000) conducted a descriptive research entitled, "A Descriptive Study on Reading Comprehension Abilities of The Second Year Students of SMU Negeri 2 Tuban in the 1999/2000 Academic Year" explained that the students' literal reading comprehension abilities were better than their inferential reading comprehension abilities. Similarly, Fitriah (2003) also conducted a descriptive research entitled "A Descriptive Study on Reading Comprehension Achievement of the Second Year Students of SLTP Negeri 1 Arjasa Jember in the 2002/2003 Academic Year" showed that 58.51% of the second year students' reading comprehension achievement was categorized as enough, but they still had difficulties in word comprehension and a bit of sentence comprehension. From those researches, it

can be concluded that there were some students still did not have good reading comprehension.

Based on the informal interview (preliminary study) that was conducted on September 2nd, 2013 with the seventh grade English teacher of SMPN 12 Jember, the researcher got information that the English teacher used two languages (English and Indonesia) in teaching reading to her students. In addition, the teacher had taught descriptive text to the seventh grade students which is suggested in 2006 Institutional Level Curriculum (KTSP) for the seventh grade students in the second semester. Furthermore, she said that the students' usually got difficulties in identifying main idea especially if the idea of the paragraph in the text did not straight to the point (implicit meaning). Therefore, based on those explanations above, the researcher was so curious to investigate the reading comprehension achievement especially on the seventh grade students in identifying main idea and identifying supporting details of the text. The information that the researcher got from the preliminary study was useful to prepare the research instrument.

Considering the background above, a descriptive research entitled: "A Descriptive Study of the Seventh Grade Students' Reading Comprehension Achievement at SMPN 12 Jember" was conducted. The problems of the research in this study was; "How was the seventh grade students' reading comprehension achievement at SMPN 12 Jember?." The objective of this research was; "To describe the seventh grade students' reading comprehension achievement at SMPN 12 Jember."

It was important to conduct this research because the researcher was so curious to know how well the seventh grade students' reading comprehension achievement especially to get the evidence whether the students' ability in identifying main idea and identifying supporting details of the the descriptive text was good or not because those aspects were important for good comprehension in reading text (Grabe in Richards and Renandya. 2002: 277). Later, the findings of this research can be useful for the future researchers as an information or reference for conducting further research, such as giving a certain treatment to obtain whether that treatment can give an effect or not on the students' reading comprehension achievement (experimental research) or a treatment that can overcome the students' difficulties in identifying main idea and identifying supporting details of the descriptive text and increase the students' achievement in reading descriptive text (classroom action research).

Research Methods

The design of this reasearch was descriptive quantitative study. According to McMillan (1992:144), a descriptive study simply describes a phenomenon and usually in the form of statistics such as frequencies or percentage, averages, and sometimes variability or graphs and other visual images. In addition, quantitative study emphasizes in facts with objective reality that can be expressed numerically (McMillan, 1992: 9). In this research, the researcher only gave the students a reading achievement test to get the

primary data in order to describe the students' reading comprehension achievement, so the researcher did not teach the students. After that, the researcher conducted interview and documentation to get the supporting data. Further, the data of the research was calculated statistically in the form of percentage by using the following formula:

$$\% = \left(\frac{f}{N} \right) \times 100\%$$

Notes:

% = The percentage of the students' reading comprehension achievement test.

f= The number of the students' correct answer in reading comprehension test.

N= The number of the test items of the reading comprehension test.

(Adapted from Healey, 2010: 30)

The research sample in this research was the seventh grade students at SMPN 12 Jember who were determined by using cluster random sampling through lottery because each class had the similar capability that can be seen from the mean score of their previous English score. In other words, the classes of the seventh grade students were homogeneous.

Discussion

Based on the findings that was taken from interview and documentation, it was known that the English teacher at SMPN 12 Jember still used the 2006 Institutional Based Curriculum (KTSP) in teaching English to the seventh grade students. The teacher had thought descriptive text to the seventh grade students. The topics that the teacher usually taught to the students were about animal, place, and people. In general, the teaching reading of descriptive text to the seventh grade students usually used pre-, whilst- and post-reading technique. Sometimes the teacher used pictures to support her teaching reading descriptive text to the students. However, the teacher did not always prepare media in every meeting of teaching reading because she did not have much time.

In addition, the students' ability in reading identifying main idea and identifying supporting details was not very good especially when the students read a new text with topic which was not so familiar for them. The factors that affected the seventh grade students who still have low achievement in reading comprehension were because they had different motivation in learning to read and also lack of vocabularies. That was why, the students were difficult to comprehend what they read. The students also got difficulty to identify the main idea of the text if the topic sentence of the main idea did not give meaning straight to the point or the topic sentence required the students to think deeply about what the main idea was. To overcome those difficulties, the English teacher usually gave the students explanation or teaching contextually and asked the students to read English text as much as possible and tried to remember at least three words of the text every day.

From the data analysis results of reading comprehension achievement test in this research showed that most of the

seventh grade students' reading comprehension achievement at SMPN 12 Jember was categorized as "good" with the mean score of their reading comprehension achievement was 70. It means that 70% of the seventh grade students in general got the score between 70 – 80 in reading descriptive text. In addition, the detail results analysis of the reading achievement test were 22 students out of 37 students (59.45%) were categorized as "good" with the scores between 70 - 80. Furthermore, 12 students out of 37 students (32.43%) of the seventh grade students got the scores between 60 – 69. It means they were categorized as "fair". Moreover, 2 students out of 37 students (5.40%) were categorized in "poor" level with the scores between 40 - 59 in their reading comprehension achievement test and only 1 student out of 37 students (2.70%) was categorized as "excellent" with the score between 81 - 100. The students' who achieved "good" and "excellent" score (standard minimum score) in reading comprehension test was able to answer or to identify the main idea and identifying the supporting details of the descriptive text. They did not face many difficulties in comprehending the text. In short, they were able to get the meaning of the sentences that was stated in the text. Meanwhile, the students who get poor achievement in reading comprehension test also got difficulties in understanding some words in the text and they were not able to identify the main idea of the descriptive text correctly.

Dealing with the analysis of the indicators of the reading comprehension achievement test, it was known that the result of the students' ability in identifying main idea was "poor" (58.69%) and the students' ability in identifying supporting details was "good" (76.09%). It happened because the students got difficulties to get the meaning in main idea of the text generally. Therefore, the result of the students' identifying supporting details was better than the result of the students' identifying main idea.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Considering the results of the data analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that in general, the seventh grade students' reading comprehension achievement in reading descriptive text at SMPN 12 Jember was classified as "good" because most of the students got the scores between 70 - 80 with the mean score of the reading test was 70. In addition, the percentage of the reading comprehension achievement test was 70%. However, they were some students still had not achieved the standard minimum score which was 70. Moreover, the students' ability in identifying supporting details was better than the result of the students' ability in identifying main idea.

There was the possibility of the students' reading achievement was caused because they had been learning without many media. Therefore, it was suggested for the English teacher to give more new texts in teaching reading of descriptive text. It will widen the seventh grade students' knowledge in order to comprehend what they read. Moreover, in order to solve the students' difficulties in identifying the main idea of the text, especially in reading descriptive text, the English teacher can give more

explanation by relating it with the thing surrounding the students' environment. In other words, the way the English teacher teaches the seventh grade students contextually was good but it is better if the teacher can prepare media as often as possible when teaching reading descriptive text because it would arouse the students' motivation and interest in learning to read. Later, the findings of this research were hopefully can be use as information that can help the future researchers to conduct further research. For example, findings more information about the students' comprehension achievement from different aspect by using different research design, such as giving a certain treatment to obtain whether that treatment can give an effect or not on the students' reading comprehension achievement (experimental research) or a treatment that can overcome the students' difficulties in reading the descriptive text and increase the students' achievement in reading descriptive text (classroom action research).

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