



## An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Reading Comprehension of Descriptive Text

Vira Fauziah<sup>✉</sup>, Suparmi, Rahma Dania

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Putra Indonesia YPTK Padang

[viraarrahan@gmail.com](mailto:viraarrahan@gmail.com)

### Abstract

This study was conducted on many difficulties faced by students when they are in reading comprehension. Therefore, this study aimed to find the student's reading comprehension difficulties in descriptive text, and the student's difficulty factors in descriptive text reading comprehension for the first grade of Tata Boga 1 at SMK N 9 Padang. This research is a qualitative descriptive method. This study used primary data in the form of collecting the data are questionnaires, interviews, observation, and document analysis. The subjects of this study were 35 students from class I Catering 1. The results from this study indicated that 69.5% of students found difficulties. Then, 23.1% of students found the usual category difficulties. Then, 6.3% of students do not discover it very difficult, and finally, 1.1% of students do not feel difficult at all. The data collection showed that students with potent categories still found many difficulties in reading comprehension, especially in the descriptive text they have read. The factors that affected understanding descriptive text readings are; lack of vocabulary mastery, lack of motivation to learn English, studying without a tutor/ online studying, and less support from environmental/social factors.

Keywords: Comprehension, Reading Text, Reading Difficulties.

### 1. Introduction

Reading is an activity that can add insight and unlock all the secrets of science. Reading is one of the important aspects that need to be mastered by students because reading is the foundation for learning subjects across all sciences [1]. This activity can increase the reader's knowledge to get new information or increase the intake of knowledge. This is also interpreted as the ability to read the text, process and understand the meaning well so that it can draw the right conclusions [2]. Reading is the process of receiving control of information in language through print media [3]. Likewise, reading is the practice of using text to create meaning from what is contained in the text [4].

English language skills are essential in attaining proficiency. These skills are either receptive or productive skills. Receptive skills involve reading and listening while productive skills consist of writing and speaking. Learners acquire receptive skills by receiving the language from oral or written material. In this case, learners decode the meaning to comprehend the receptive material. The importance of reading as a language skill can never be underestimated. It is one of the essential means through which information can be obtained especially for educational purposes. Reading serves as one of the most commonly utilized language proficiency skills across the globe. In addition, lack of reading ability results in poor academic performance among students. They also face various challenges outside the academic environment due to reading deficiency [5].

Furthermore, for increasing students' knowledge we need to apply the reading as a habit. For that, as a teacher, it is necessary to train students to get used to reading. This activity can boost success in learning English. Teaching reading, not only need things that are so complex, students only need focus and have many vocabularies to understand the reading well [6]. In addition to learning outcomes, they compared learners' monitoring of their comprehension and allocation of their study time. On each medium, immediately after studying each text, participants predicted their success rates (in %) and were tested through multiple-choice questions. Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, these authors are the only ones who empirically considered the time frame as a potential moderating factor of media effects on learning outcomes [7].

Meanwhile, to find out students' difficulties in reading comprehension, the researchers used descriptive texts as a measure of their understanding, because it is the type of text that must be mastered by first grade students of SMK. In reading for this grade, students are expected to achieve competency standards, namely understanding the purpose of social functions, text structure, linguistic elements, and contextual meaning of simple descriptive texts. For tenth graders, based on the 2013 National Education Standards Agency (BSNP), there are two basic competencies required in reading descriptive texts as follows; Understand the purpose, structure of the text, and linguistic elements of a simple written descriptive text, and Understanding the meaning in simple written descriptive text.

In fact, students' difficulties in reading comprehension do not occur in junior high school, but in high school

they also found many difficulties. As stated by a teacher of Tata Boga on July 28 at SMK N 9 Padang, that the understanding students' ability in learning English is tiny, especially in reading comprehension. It can even be said that their standard of understanding is low to medium. Thus, a teacher must understand the student's situation and the difficulties they face in learning English in the classroom [8].

However, reading comprehension for students who do not have the provision of words, will indeed find it difficult to understand the conclusions contained in the reading text. Thus, to teach them, it takes a sufficient style in learning to read. Not only that, the lack of background that students have about knowledge is also able to slow down their understanding. As in the implementation of learning activities in first grade of Tata Boga, the lack of interest in reading makes it difficult for them to understand the readings that have been given by the teacher.

## 2. Research Method

This study, researcher used descriptive qualitative to finish this research. Qualitative research is research that aims to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perception, motivation, action, and others by way of description in the form of words, language, in a natural context and by utilizing various natural methods [9]. Miles and Huberman stated that activities in qualitative data analysis were carried out interactively and continuously until they were completed, so that the data was clear [10].

Researcher chose students Tata Boga SMKN 9 Padang as respondents in this study. While, the population was the first grade Tata Boga SMKN 9 Padang. Students were divided into seven classes. From the sample and items from the larger population that we collected and analyzed to make conclusions. However, it turns out that the population is too large to be used as a research sample. So, the researcher used purposive sampling because the English teacher at SMK N 9 suggested that the researcher choose one class. In addition, in determining and selecting classes, the researcher must consider choosing a class that has good abilities, both in terms of attitude, understanding in learning and also their cohesiveness in the learning classroom, because this will help researchers to realize a good research process and smoothly as planned.

The sample of this study chooses First Grade of Tata Boga 1 SMK N 9 Padang which took a sample of 15 students after being determined, according to the criteria that have been explained by the researcher.

Based on the problems that have been described in the background, several factors cause them to be unable to understand the reading. First, the lack of background those students have when reading, especially in English. So, they do not get an idea of what they have been read.

Second, the students do not master enough vocabulary when they are reading the text. So, this will make it difficult for them to understand the reading because they are not able to get a good reading idea.

This research has been carried out in SMKN 9 Padang in the 2021/2022 academic year. The object of this research were students in reading comprehension of the descriptive text provided by the researcher.

In qualitative research, data collection is mostly done by participant observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. The basic methods relied on by qualitative researcher to collect information are participation in setting, observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation review. In this study, researchers used interviews supported by questionnaires and documentation [11].

### 1) Observation

The researcher observed the teaching and learning process of reading comprehension. The teaching aspect of the learning process is described as follows:

Table 1 Observation Guideline

	Students' Problems
Students' problems in learning reading comprehension:	1. Students have difficulty in determining the main idea.
	2. Students have difficulty in finding specific information.
	3. Students have difficulty in making inference.
	4. Students have difficulty in identifying reference.
	5. Students have difficulty understanding the meaning of words or sentences.

### 2) Interview

Interview is an activity carried out to obtain information directly by expressing questions to the respondents [12]. An interview means dealing directly between the interviewer and the respondent, and the activities are carried out orally. Likewise, interviews are data collection techniques through questions asked orally to respondents [13].

### 3) Questionnaire

This research used a questionnaire to support the data obtained from interviews with students. This research used closed questions. A closed question respondent is given ready-made answers to choose from, this item does not require the respondent to produce free writing; instead, they must choose one of the alternatives, regardless of whether their preferred answer is among them. Then, the researcher distributed the questionnaires after the reading comprehension teaching process. The guidelines for the questionnaire used by researchers can be explained as follows:

Table 2 Questionnaire Guideline

Aspect	Indicators
Student's Problems	1. Ask students whether they have a problem for finding specific information.
	2. Ask students whether they have a problem in determining the main idea.
	3. Ask students whether they have a problem in making inference.
	4. Ask students whether they have a problem in identifying reference.
	5. Ask students whether they have a problem due to lack of background.

The formula to finding the percentage of questionnaire results, according to Sugiyono (2008):

$$p = \frac{f \times 100}{n}$$

Where p is Percentage, f is Frequency of each questionnaire answer, and n is Number of respondents.

Data reducing is a process of selecting, focusing on simplification, abstraction and transformation of data, in the form of written notes found in the field. Data reduction is a type of analysis carried out to sharpen, categorize, direct, eliminate data and organize data to obtain conclusions and verification [14]. This means that researcher choose important data that has been collected. Then the researcher categorizes the data related to the difficulties faced by students and the factors that cause students' difficulties in understanding English reading texts for first grade Tata Boga 1 at SMK N 9 Padang in the 2021/2022 academic year. The data were obtained from interviews and texts. In this case, the researcher abstracts the data.

Data display is the second level in the Miles and Huberman model of qualitative data analysis [15]. Views can be text or expanded diagrams, graphs, charts, tables or matrices that provide new ways to organize thinking about more textual embedded data. At the display stage, additional, higher order categories or themes may emerge from the data that go beyond those first discovered during the initial data reduction process. After the researcher wrote, edited, classified, and reduced, then the researcher presented and described it by drawing conclusions from the data and information that had been obtained [16].

### 3. Result and Discussion

The researcher used two instruments to obtain data from students. The two instruments are questionnaire and observation. This questionnaire developed from Nuttal's theory, regarding the difficulties found by students in reading comprehension in descriptive texts. Namely, such determining the main idea, finding specific information, making inference, identifying reference, and the understanding meaning of words. Then, before

they answered, the researcher first gave an explanation of how to fill out the questionnaire. Below are the results of their answers:

Table 3 The Questionnaire list

No	Indicators	Respondents			
		1	2	3	4
1	I find it difficult to determine the idea of reading the English text	20	12	3	0
2	I find it difficult to understand English reading ideas.	24	8	2	1
3	I find it difficult to get specific information from an English text.	20	12	2	1
4	I find it difficult to understand specific information from English texts.	25	9	1	0
5	I find it difficult to making inference in English text.	30	5	0	0
6	I find it difficult to get idea to make inference in English text.	28	6	1	0
7	I find it difficult to identifying reference in English text.	18	11	5	1
8	I find it difficult to understand reference in English text.	19	8	7	1
9	I have difficulty understanding the meaning of an English text.	27	7	1	0
10	I have difficulty understanding sentences in English texts.	32	3	0	0
Total of each difficulties		243	81	22	4
Total of all difficulties		350			

Based on the questionnaire table above, the researcher explained that out of 35 students there were 69.5% with the highest score they strongly agreed with the difficulties they found in reading comprehension. This means, more than most of the First Grade of Catering 1 SMK N 9 Padang students, there are still many difficulties in English. Then, 23.1% of them gave an agree answer. This means that, in addition to finding it very difficult, some of them also found difficulties in the moderate category. Furthermore, there were 6.3% of them gave disagreed answers. The point is, among them there are some students who do not agree if they find difficulties, meaning that they already have the ability to learn English, especially in reading comprehension. And the last result was 1.1% of their answers, that they did not find any difficulties in learning English, especially in reading comprehension. This group of students means that they already have very good skills in English.

Based on the description above, the researcher concludes that, from the questionnaire conducted by First Grade of Tata Boga 1 SMK N 9 Padang students, they are still very minimal in mastering English, especially in reading comprehension in descriptive texts. The researcher concluded that according to the results of data processing from the questionnaire.

In the second instrument, the researcher used observation. In the observation, the researcher used the observation list to observe the students in the learning class. The observation list is used as a guide for researchers in observing them, how they learn in class, how they face difficulties in class, and how they interact with fellow students to liven up their English learning class. The researcher uses a list of observations by

referring to Nuttal's theory. The following points are listed in the observation list used by researchers to observe:

3.	School and learning environment, give affects reading interest in English.	Whether in school and learning environment, affects your reading interest in English?
----	--	---

Table 4 Observation's List

No	Observation's List	Checklist		
		Yes	No	Nb.
1	Students have difficulty in determining the main idea.	√		
2	Students have difficulty in finding specific information.	√		
3	Students have difficulty in making inference.	√		
4	Students have difficulty in identifying reference	√		
5	Students have difficulty understanding the meaning of words or sentences	√		

Based on the results of observations in the learning class, the researcher concluded several points from the results of this study. The first is, when the researcher observes students in the class learning English, students pay attention to the teacher when explaining the lesson well. Then, they formed groups to do the tasks that have been given by the teacher. Next, they discuss the task.

Second, because they cannot understand the text, this makes it difficult for them to make inferences from the text. So they are not able to draw conclusions from the reading text. The last thing is, they are not able to identify the existing reference sentences in the text, which should be able to become new information for them. However, because of their lack of understanding of the text, they were only able to master some simple sentences but did not support the perfection of understanding the reading text.

From the results of this observation, the researcher also concluded that, in observing most of the students in the class, they still found it difficult to understand the reading of the English text given by the teacher as a group assignment. In their completion, they asked a lot of friends and teachers about the meaning of the difficult words they found. This shows that the results of this observation support the questionnaire that has been given by the researcher to the students.

In the second research question, the researcher used interviews to get the right answer. The researcher chose to use the interview because he felt that the interview was an accurate instrument because the researcher got the answers directly from the students' mouths face-to-face. This is the satisfaction of the researcher getting a good answer.

Table 5 Interview's List

No.	Indicators	Questions
1.	Difficulties to understand long reading text.	Do you find difficulties to understand long reading text?
2.	Difficult to know the meaning of the vocabulary.	Do you find difficult to know the meaning of the vocabulary?

In using the interview instrument, the researcher did it for 15 students who were chosen randomly. The list of questions gave by the researcher was 3, which was developed from Rahim's (2006) theory, regarding the difficulty factors found by students in reading comprehension in English descriptive texts.

This interview conducted on 15 students of First Grade Tata Boga 1 SMK N 9 Padang. However, because their answers were the same and in line, the researcher only wrote 1 interview by recapitulating their answers into one.

Based on the description of the interview conducted by the researcher by developing the theory from Rahim (2006), it can be concluded that, in the first indicator, students found difficulties in understanding long texts in English. The influencing factors are the lack of vocabulary they have, in connection with English which is a foreign language. So that their interest in learning is minimal, especially when they study online during the pandemic. This triggers them to be lazy to learn English.

Then the second indicator, students found difficulties in knowing the meaning of vocabulary. Based on their answers, which the researcher concluded, the factors that influenced them to face this difficulty were because English was a foreign language and also their lack of interest in studying on their own at home. Finally, the environment is able to attract their interest to learn and explore English better.

In the researcher's analysis, the main point of the difficulty factors they face is because English is a foreign language, which many students don't like so that it supports the emergence of other difficulty factors. For them, English is a difficult language to understand, many vocabularies that they do not have which makes it difficult to understand sentences or even English texts. Then, the home-learning factor triggers them to be less interested in learning English, there is no tutor or teacher who teaches better to help attract their interest in learning English.

However, if there is a teacher or tutor who teaches them or even a supportive learning environment, they will be interested in learning English well. When asked, they want to study English for work purposes, or just playing games and watching western movies.

In the first question, researcher obtained data from the questionnaires distributed and observations made to observe students in learning English. By developing the theory from Nuttal in Huda (2019), it turns out that students find difficulties in many aspects, as stated in the results of the research above.

The difficulties that students find have an influence on understanding when they learn English. In the first indicator, students found difficulties in determining reading ideas. The difficulties they face are influenced by various factors, in general, students' internal and external factors (Rahim: 2006). Then the second indicator, students found difficulties in making inferences from the readings they have read, this is due to their lack of understanding of the English reading. Furthermore, difficulties found when identifying the location of the reference sentence from the reading. Lack of understanding of the language, caused them to find a lot of difficulties. Being a foreign language and the lack of vocabulary triggers them to found difficulties in various aspects when reading.

In the second question, the indicators developed by Rahim (2006) regarding the factors that influence students' difficulties in reading comprehension of descriptive texts. The first indicator is the difficulty factor faced by students in understanding long English texts. based on the results of his research, this is because English is a foreign language and also the lack of vocabulary mastery. Second, their difficulty in knowing vocabulary is caused by their lack of capital in mastering vocabulary and also decreasing learning factors. Finally, the learning environment that affects their interest in learning. This factor becomes a big factor when having a learning environment that does not support the deepening of English.

#### 4. Conclusion

The purpose of this study analyzed the difficulties found by students in reading comprehension and to find out the factors that influence the causes of students' difficulties in reading comprehension on descriptive texts. From the average of the informant answers, the first factor is their lack of understanding of the English language is a minimal mastery of vocabulary, so that they find it difficult to find meaning, get ideas and get new information from an English descriptive text. Second, the lack of motivation to learn English because it is a foreign language that they don't like because many find it difficult to understand. Third, online learning factors also trigger their low interest in learning, especially for understanding English reading texts. The last factor is the influence of the association or student environment in socializing. The factor of the learning environment that does not support students to like English is also one of the reasons why students find it difficult to focus and understand English, especially in reading comprehension of descriptive texts. The social influence of friends who are lazy and don't like English can reduce their motivation to learn and understand English. However, they will be triggered to learn English when the learning environment is very interested in English, especially their playmates.

#### References

- [1] Rintaningrum, R. (2019). Explaining the important contribution of reading literacy to the country's generations: Indonesian's perspectives. *Journal of Turkish Science Education*, 11(1), 3-23.
- [2] Abdulkadirova, L. Y., & Mirzajonova, E. T. (2021). The importance of reading competencies in the context of the "industry 4.0" industrial revolution. *Academicia: An International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 11(1), 205-210. <https://doi.org/10.5958/2249-7137.2021.00011.2>
- [3] Williams, C. R., Cook, A. E., & O'Brien, E. J. (2018). Validating semantic illusions: Competition between context and general world knowledge. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 44(9). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/xlm0000526>
- [4] Davies, L. M., Bode, K., Martin, S., & Sawyer, W. (2021). Reading in the (post) digital age: Large databases and the future of literature in secondary English classrooms. <https://doi.org/10.1080/04250494.2020.1790991>
- [5] Al-Jarrah, H., & Ismail, N. S. B. (2018). Reading comprehension difficulties among EFL learners in higher learning institutions. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 8(7), 32-41. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v8n7p32>
- [6] Schmitt, N. (2019). Understanding vocabulary acquisition, instruction, and assessment: A research agenda. *Language Teaching*, 52(2), 261-274. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444819000053>
- [7] Delgado, P., Vargas, C., Ackerman, R., & Salmerón, L. (2018). Don't throw away your printed books: A meta-analysis on the effects of reading media on reading comprehension. *Educational Research Review*, 25, 23-38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2018.09.003>
- [8] Al-Sobhi, B. M. S., & Preece, A. S. (2018). Teaching English speaking skills to the Arab students in the Saudi school in Kuala Lumpur: Problems and solutions. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 6(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiaac.ijels.v.6n.1p.1>
- [9] Royadi, D., Susiana, N., & Khumaida, F. A. (2019). Effectiveness management of qualitative research in writing scientific papers. *Aptisi Transactions on Management (ATM)*, 3(1), 84-90. <https://doi.org/10.33050/atm.v3i1.848>
- [10] Khotimah, K., Suprijono, A., & Imron, A. (2021, December). The Perception of a Juvenile Delinquency for Junior High School Students in Blitar City. In *International Jointed Conference on Social Science (ICSS 2021)* (pp. 219-226). Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.211130.039>
- [11] Azungah, T. (2018). Qualitative research: deductive and inductive approaches to data analysis. *Qualitative research journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-D-18-00035>
- [12] Lin, C. S., Jeng, M. Y., & Yeh, T. M. (2018). The elderly perceived meanings and values of virtual reality leisure activities: A means-end chain approach. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 15(4), 663. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15040663>
- [13] Giovenco, D., Gill, K., Fynn, L., Duyver, M., O'Rourke, S., van der Straten, A., ... & Bekker, L. G. (2021). Experiences of oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) use disclosure among South African adolescent girls and young women and its perceived impact on adherence. *Plos one*, 16(3), e0248307. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0248307>
- [14] Setiawan, I., Sukristyanto, A., & Rochim, A. I. The Implementation of Law Number 16 of 2019 a Case Study of Early Marriage Prevention in Hulu Sungai Utara Regency Indonesia. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.jpaa.20210503.16>

- [15] Pramesti, T. I., & Retnawati, H. (2019, October). Difficulties in learning algebra: An analysis of students' errors. In *Journal of Physics: Conference Series* (Vol. 1320, No. 1, p. 012061). IOP Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1320/1/012061>
- [16] Sabanci, K., Aslan, M. F., Ropelewska, E., & Unlarsen, M. F. (2022). A convolutional neural network-based comparative study for pepper seed classification: Analysis of selected deep features with support vector machine. *Journal of Food Process Engineering*, 45(6), e13955. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jfpe.13955>