

ANALYSIS OF READING COMPREHENSION TEXT AT SMP MUHAMMADIYAH 2
GORONTALO

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze students' reading comprehension skills on narrative texts at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Gorontalo and the factors that influenced such comprehension, both at the literal and inferential comprehension levels. The research method used was descriptive qualitative, with data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation. The main data sources were observation and interview results, while secondary data sources included relevant books, journals, and theses. Data analysis techniques used included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, with triangulation as a step to increase data validity. The results showed that the reading comprehension ability of grade VIII students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Gorontalo was still relatively low. In the Roro Jonggrang text, about 40% of students showed good ability, while in the Timun Emas text, almost 90% of students were in the low category. Although students were able to understand the story structure and characters, they struggled to identify moral messages and deeper meanings and answer implicit questions. Factors influencing the low comprehension included limited vocabulary, lack of motivation to read, an unsupportive environment, and the influence of the teacher's role in the learning process.

Keywords: Narrative Text, Reading Comprehension, Reading Skills

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, English has become a global language, widely spoken as a second language across the globe. With the rapid development of technology and global interconnectedness, it has become essential for Indonesians to learn English. Many countries include English in their education curriculum, starting from an early age. In Indonesia, English is vital for communication in fields like science, aviation, computer science, diplomacy, and tourism. Learning English at the junior high school level (SMP/MTS) is aimed at developing students' language skills, especially in writing and speaking, while also fostering an awareness of English's importance in global competitiveness (Tanduklangi et al., 2019). Furthermore, students are encouraged to develop an understanding of the relationship between language and culture.

English holds a significant role in advancing technology and science in Indonesia. Additionally, it serves as a bridge for global communication, especially through digital platforms. To access this global information, mastering English is crucial. There are four primary skills that students must develop in learning English: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Among these, reading is often considered the most important skill, as it enriches students' knowledge and supports their growth in other language areas (Yoon, 2024). According to Jiang (2015) reading ability is essential for comprehending text and obtaining information. Locher (2019) also emphasized that reading comprehension is indispensable for absorbing knowledge, particularly in the fields of science and technology.

Reading comprehension involves not only understanding words and sentences but also interpreting deeper meanings, drawing conclusions, and analyzing the content critically (Çağ, 2024). Pauk (1979) defines reading comprehension as the process of extracting the message conveyed by the author. With strong reading comprehension skills, students can identify main ideas, recognize relationships between concepts, and integrate new knowledge effectively.

In education, reading comprehension is not merely about fluently reading words but about understanding the deeper messages, such as the author's purpose, the implicit meanings, and the main ideas (Langer, 1984). These skills are essential for effective learning across subjects and for accessing information. English language learners are exposed to various texts, including narrative texts, which are

often used to practice reading comprehension. Narrative texts, which include both fiction and non-fiction, require students to grasp storylines and identify moral lessons (Gajria & McAlenney, 2020). Students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Gorontalo are introduced to various narrative texts, which provide opportunities to practice their reading comprehension skills.

There are four types of reading comprehension according to Crawley and Mountain in Herliyanto (2015). First, literal comprehension is the most basic type of comprehension. Second, inferential comprehension means understanding information that is stated indirectly (implied) in the text. Third, critical comprehension. Fourth, creative comprehension. These types of reading comprehension need to be understood by teachers because they are the basis for implementing reading comprehension learning. In addition, these types of comprehension are interrelated. Literal comprehension is the basis for higher comprehension, namely inferential, critical, and creative comprehension. Burns and Roe; Rubin; and Syafi'ie in Kholiq and Luthfiyati (2018), Literal understanding is the ability to understand information that is explicitly stated in the text and literal understanding is the lowest level of understanding. Inferential understanding is the ability to understand information that is stated indirectly (implied) in the text. Critical comprehension is the ability to evaluate text material. Creative comprehension is the ability to express emotional and aesthetic responses to texts in accordance with personal and professional standards.

At the junior high school level especially, relevant types of reading comprehension include literal and inferential comprehension, which are adapted to the context and students' abilities. Literal comprehension is basic comprehension that focuses on the information conveyed directly in the text. At this age, students are generally able to understand information that is clearly written, such as recognizing facts or statements in a reading passage. Meanwhile, inferential comprehension at the junior high level involves the ability to understand meanings that are not directly mentioned in the text, or that are implied. This includes the ability to draw conclusions, understand hidden messages, and connect various information in the text. This inferential comprehension is a step up from literal comprehension.

However, based on preliminary observations at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Gorontalo, it was found that students faced several challenges in understanding English narrative texts. Many struggled with identifying the main idea, drawing conclusions, and recognizing the moral message. Contributing factors to these difficulties include limited vocabulary, a lack of grammar proficiency, and insufficient practice in reading English texts. These factors hinder students' ability to engage with narrative texts at a deeper level, which is crucial for their overall reading comprehension skills.

Previous studies on reading comprehension in narrative texts have provided valuable insights. For example, research by Kasdemir (2023) demonstrated varying levels of reading comprehension in narrative texts among students from different schools. However, this study differentiates itself by using student worksheet analysis to measure comprehension, instead of relying solely on question-and-answer or multiple-choice tests. Additionally, this study focuses on grade VIII students and examines not just their final answers but also their cognitive processes when responding to essay questions. Furthermore, this study introduces new variables such as motivation, interest, and vocabulary limitations, which are expected to offer a deeper understanding of the factors influencing reading comprehension.

Therefore, this article aims to explore the reading comprehension abilities of grade VIII students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Gorontalo, specifically in understanding narrative texts, and to identify the causes behind their difficulties in comprehending these texts. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the development of effective teaching and assessment methods to improve students' reading comprehension skills.

METHODS

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how eighth-grade students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Gorontalo understood narrative texts. The goal was to gain insight into both their literal and inferential reading comprehension by observing real classroom situations. Data were gathered from two main sources: primary data, which came from direct observations, interviews with students and teachers, and students' reading assignments; and secondary data, which were taken from books, journals, and previous research related to reading comprehension.

The research subjects were grade VIII students and English teachers who were selected to participate in this study. To collect the data, the researcher used an observation checklist focused on ten key indicators of comprehension, a semi-structured interview guide, and various written documents. These methods helped the researcher gather rich, detailed information from different angles. Once the

data were collected, they were analyzed through three steps: reducing the data to focus on what mattered most, organizing the information clearly, and drawing meaningful conclusions. The findings showed how students processed the texts and highlighted several challenges they faced, such as limited vocabulary, low motivation, minimal teacher support, a less encouraging school environment, and a lack of reading support at home.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study concerning the reading comprehension abilities of Grade VIII students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Gorontalo in understanding narrative texts. The data were obtained through student worksheets and interviews.

A. Students’ Reading Comprehension on “Poor Mr. Lebai”

Based on the analysis of the student worksheets for the narrative text Poor Mr Lebai, 8 students (40%) achieved scores in the high category, Four students (20%) were categorized as medium, while the other 8 students (40%), fell into the low category. The average score for this text was 70.

Table 1. Reading Comprehension Scores for “Poor Mr. Lebai”

Category	Value	Number of Students	Percentage
High	≥70	8	40%
Medium	50-69	4	20%
Low	<50	8	40%

B. Students’ Reading Comprehension on “Timun Emas”

In the Timun Emas narrative, no students achieved scores in the high category. Two students (10%) were categorized as medium, while the majority, 18 students (90%), fell into the low category. The average score for this text was 52.

Table 2. Reading Comprehension Scores for “Timun Emas”

Category	Value	Number of Students	Percentage
High	≥70	0	0%
Medium	50–69	2	10%
Low	<50	18	90%

C. Students’ Reading Comprehension on “Roro Jonggrang”

For the Roro Jonggrang narrative, 5 students (25%) achieved scores in the high category, 5 students (25%) were in the medium category, and 10 students (50%) fell into the low category. The average score was 65

Tabel 3. Reading Comprehension Scores “Roro Jonggrang”

Category	Value	Number of Students	Percentage
High	≥70	5	25%
Medium	50-69	5	25%
Low	<50	10	50%

D. Comparison of Reading Comprehension Across Texts

Figure 1 shows the distribution of student reading comprehension scores across the three narrative texts. The Poor Mr. Lebai text resulted in the highest percentage of students in the high category (40%), followed by Roro Jonggrang (25%), and Timun Emas (0%).

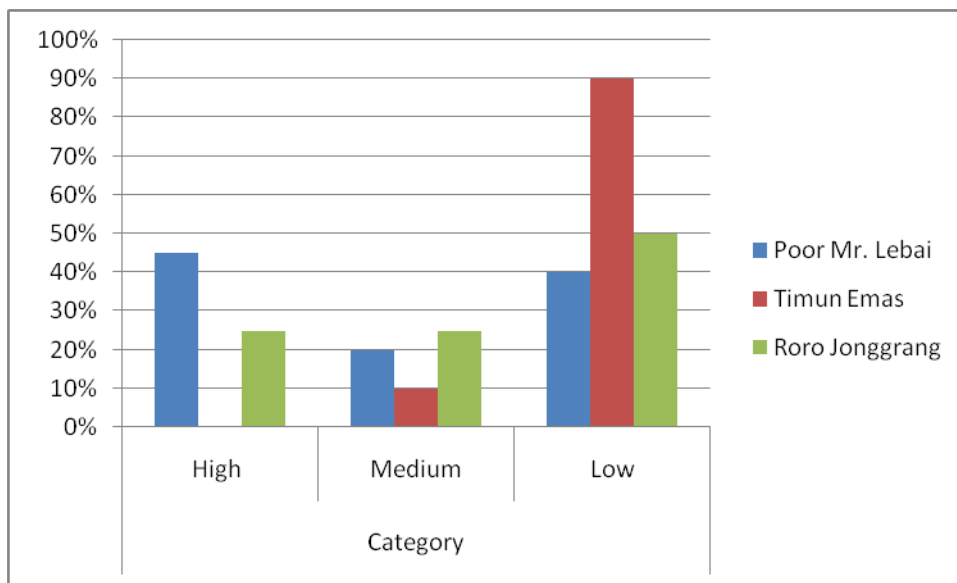


Figure 1. Comparison of Reading Comprehension Categories Across Narrative Texts (Bar chart Here Showing High, Medium, and Low Percentages for Each Text)

Based on Figure 1 which illustrates the bar chart of the results of reading comprehension skills of grade VIII students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Gorontalo, it can be seen that 40% of students obtained a high category on the narrative text Poor Mr. Lebai. In addition, 25% of students are in the medium category on the narrative text of Roro Jonggrang, while 90% of students are in the low category on the narrative text of Timun Emas.

In addition to the test results, the study identified five main factors causing students' difficulties in reading comprehension: (1) lack of vocabulary mastery, (2) low interest in reading, (3) monotonous teaching methods, (4) limited school facilities, especially reading materials, and (5) unsupportive home environment. The findings were supported by data from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with both teachers and students, which consistently highlighted the dominant role of vocabulary limitations and low motivation in students' struggles to comprehend narrative texts.

This study investigated the reading comprehension skills of eighth-grade students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Gorontalo by analyzing their performance on three narrative texts: Poor Mr. Lebai, Timun Emas, and Roro Jonggrang. The findings reveal that students' comprehension levels varied across the texts, suggesting differences in text difficulty and student engagement with the content. Based on data from student worksheets, it is known that the students performed best on the text Poor Mr. Lebai, where 40% achieved a high comprehension score. This was followed by Roro Jonggrang with 25% scoring in the high category, while Timun Emas presented the greatest challenge, with 90% of students scoring in the low category.

These results indicate that students' comprehension tends to be better when texts are simpler and focus on literal comprehension, such as identifying settings and explicitly stated facts. This aligns with Rubin's (in Hilalayah) notion that literal comprehension allows readers to process directly stated information with minimal inference.

Conversely, texts requiring inferential comprehension (Teo, 2012), such as Timun Emas, posed greater difficulty. Students struggled to summarize the content, identify moral messages, and interpret implied meanings. This is supported by Murphy (2024), who describe inferential comprehension as the ability to derive understanding from implicit cues, an advanced skill often hindered by limited vocabulary and insufficient exposure to complex texts.

These findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the strong correlation between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension ability (Jenkins & Pany, 2017). Nunan (1991) emphasized the pivotal role of vocabulary in facilitating comprehension, particularly when interpreting implicit content. Additionally, the data supports Asher (2017) that reading interest significantly affects reading outcomes. Students demonstrated low motivation when reading English texts, particularly those they found difficult or unengaging.

Teacher methodology also emerged as a contributing factor (Sadeghi et al., 2016). The dominance of traditional lecture-based methods limited student engagement and failed to foster an interactive learning environment (Kovács, 2018). This echoes findings from prior studies that emphasize the importance of varied teaching strategies and student-centered approaches in enhancing language learning outcomes.

Furthermore, external environmental factors such as the limited availability of English reading materials at school and the minimal use of English at home, they were found to negatively impact comprehension (Feng & Chen, 2016). These findings are aligned with (Brandl, 2002), which categorizes comprehension barriers into internal (cognitive, psychological) and external (environmental, instructional) factors.

This study is subject to several limitations. First, it was conducted only in one school with a limited number of grade VIII students, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study focused solely on narrative texts, excluding other text genres such as expository or descriptive texts, which may elicit different comprehension patterns. Third, the data collection was carried out within a limited time frame, preventing longitudinal observation of student progress.

In addition, this study has not deeply explored psychological factors, such as students' reading anxiety or self-confidence levels, which may have influenced their comprehension results. This limitation opens up opportunities for future research to further explore these aspects, as well as expand the scope of text types studied, involve students from more diverse school backgrounds, and include psychological assessments to get a more comprehensive picture of students' reading ability.

Future research is recommended to explore reading comprehension on various text genres to see the consistency of students' difficulties. In addition, vocabulary enrichment programs and multimedia-based interactive learning strategies need to be studied to improve literal and inferential comprehension. Longitudinal studies are also important to monitor the long-term development of reading skills. Equally important, psychological aspects such as anxiety and motivation to read need to be included to gain a more comprehensive picture of the internal factors that affect students' comprehension.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the reading comprehension ability of grade VIII students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Gorontalo towards narrative texts is still relatively low, with varying results in the three texts tested: Poor Mr. Lebai (40% students in the high category), Roro Jonggrang (25% students in the medium category), and Timun Emas (90% students in the low category). This difference in results was influenced by the type of questions, where the explicit questions in Poor Mr. Lebai made it easier for students to understand the setting of the story, although they had difficulty in finding the main idea, moral message, and conclusion of the story. Factors that influence students' difficulties include limited vocabulary, low motivation and interest in reading, lack of support facilities at school, and lack of parental attention to children's education. This study was limited to a sample of students in one school, so the results cannot be generalized. To improve reading comprehension, it is recommended that students' vocabulary be strengthened, motivation and interest in reading be increased, and support from teachers and parents be improved, in addition to improving reading learning facilities at school.

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