An Analysis of Ability in Comprehending Reading Text of Seventh Semester Students at English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang

Shanty Octavia [1] and Jufri[2]

[1] Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia, ✉ (e-mail) shanty.oct74@gmail.com
[2] Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia, ✉ (e-mail) jufrisyahruddin@gmail.com

Abstract

This study was aimed at analyzing the students' ability in comprehending reading text of seventh semester students at English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang. This study was descriptive research. Samples of the research were 27 students by using cluster random sampling. The reading test was used to collect data. The results showed that students' ability in getting inferential meaning was in moderate level, and the students' ability in getting critical meaning was also in moderate level. In conclusion, the seventh semester students' ability in understanding inferential and critical meaning was in moderate level. Therefore, the lecturers are expected to improve the students' ability in understanding referential and critical meaning by giving more practices in reading class or outside the classroom. First, in general, the students' ability in understanding the implicit meaning was moderate. The result found that the score distribution obtained by the students. From 27 students taken as sample, nine students got scores 55-59 or 33.33 %, and 12 students got range scores from 60 to 74. The score table also indicates that no students got 85-100. In addition, only 5 students got range scores from 75 to 84.

Keywords: reading ability, inferential meaning, critical meaning

Introduction

Reading is one of basic language skills. Together with listening, it is called receptive skills, while the two others, speaking and writing are labelled as productive skills. The first two skills named as receptive skills since they are used to get information in written and spoken form. Speaking and writing then, called productive skills because they are used to convey the information orally and in written form. All these skills are important in learning English, but reading is more crucial to be possessed by the learner since this skill is very helpful in almost all aspects of their academic activities. There are a lot of important information about this subject should be found out from text books, articles, journals, papers and so forth. The information sometimes can be easily found on the text, but sometimes it needs students ability to make a conclusion or to interpret the text or, to comprehend what have been written by the writer on that books in order to seek the important information conveyed. That is the reason why students should have a good reading skills.

However, mastering reading actually is not an easy task since the students should understand three kinds of meanings, that is, literal, inferential and critical meaning. Understanding these meanings need a theoretical base of reading. For this, the student is demanded to understand the reading theories as well as to know and to apply reading strategies.

Based on the writer's experiences as a lecturer, most students do not find difficulties in understanding literal information because they can focus their mind to the facts that are given directly by a writer in the reading selection (explicitly exposed). On the other hand, when they are asked about the information behind the facts (implicitly), it seems they are not able to give the appropriate answers. This is of course a problem that should be solved by English lecturer especially reading lecturer. English lecturer has a responsibility to overcome these problems. For this purpose, in reading class, the lecturer is asked to provide the students with inferential and critical skills in reading. This is important because reading is not only about written facts and information but also about unstated facts. Besides, a reader is also required to be able to evaluate about a writer's ideas. Evaluating the writer's ideas will help the reader to know and recognize all information and as a result the reader will get thorough comprehension.

Considering the importance of reading skill, English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang provides the students with a series of Reading Course as a compulsory subject in the curriculum, from the lower up to the higher level of reading skills. Based on the syllabus, the students have learnt Basic Reading, Intermediate Reading, Critical Reading and Extensive Reading. All of these reading subjects are offered to the students in order to make the students have good ability in reading, that is by following and passing all those reading

classes, they are expected to become effective readers. Furthermore, their reading ability will help them in their effort to be a successful students.

It is assumed that all the English Department students of FBS of Universitas Negeri Padang who have passed all the reading subjects, will have a good reading ability and apply some reading strategies in comprehending reading text. Especially the ability of understanding inferential meaning, the unstated meaning of the text they read. It is important to find out since this reading skill will help them in comprehending their reading.

Some researchers were also interested in this topic, so they did some studies about students' ability in understanding reading text. Attaprechakul (2013) studied the inference strategy to improve reading comprehension of challenging text on students of Tammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand. He found that inference strategy improve students' reading comprehension. However, this study only explained about the inference strategy and did not describe about the students' ability in reading texts. Next, Husna et. al (2016) had analyzed students' ability to make inferences in reading news item texts, in Bung Hatta University. They sum up that students ability in making inference of news item texts is moderate. Nevertheless, their study was limited to news item texts. Then, Rahmawati (2018) studied students' English reading comprehension through KWL (Know-Want-Learn) learning strategies. She concluded that KWL strategy is able to improve students' reading comprehension. The other study conducted by Sriyati, Mukhaiyar, and Rosa (2019) highlighted the use of INSERT (Interactive Notation System to Effective Reading and Thinking) strategy in teaching reading comprehension. They found that the second grade junior high school students who had high motivation and were taught by using INSERT strategy had significantly better reading comprehension on descriptive text than those taught by Small Group Discussion strategy. However, this research only focused on the KWL strategy. Finally, Kartawijaya (2017) discussed about the students' reading comprehension in comprehending descriptive text. It revealed that the students' reading ability in comprehending the descriptive text was low. However, this research was limited to descriptive text only.

Although there are several studies which have been conducted by previous researchers but there is still little information about the students reading ability in understanding implicit meaning. Therefore, this research was conducted to fill the gap by analysing the students' reading ability in understanding implicit meaning by seventh semester students at English Department of Faculty of Languages and Arts of Universitas Negeri Padang.

Reading is a process of thinking of readers who are trying to catch the meaning of a passage. In this situation, readers try to comprehend a text that they read. It means that reading is a process of readers to comprehend a text which encourage them to apply strategy in order to catch the idea of the writer's meaning. In addition, Cline, Johnstone, and King (2006) mention that reading is decoding and understanding written text. It means that decoding requires translating the symbols of writing system. This definition relates that reading is not only about reading a text, but also sign or symbol such body language and road sign. Readers are asked to interpret meaning from the symbol by relating to the situation.

Reading comprehension is a part of reading skill. Klingner, Vaughn, and Brodman (2007) state that reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning by coordinating a number of complex processes that include word reading, word and word knowledge, and fluency. It needs readers strategy in using their reading skills to get the writers messages, especially if the information conveyed are implisitly stated. The ability in bridging all the clues present on the text and end up with a conclusion as the writer's intended, is needed.

Furthermore, according to Nunan (2003) that in reading the information in the text is processed by following the flow of thought of the writer in a text to the reader's mind, so that the reader can build meaning. For instance, the reader attempts to find the writer's idea, then the reader interpret the text as possible as writer's idea. In addition, Commander and Guerrero (2013) say that reading is an interaction process of communication between reader and text. These two experts actually have the same concept of the reading. On the other hand, Nunan emphasizes on the combination of the information in the text with the reader's mind, but Commander and Guerrero view that the reader should have communication with the writer in order to catch the meaning.

In contrary, Goodman and Wood (2004) state that reading comprehension as an interactive process between language and thought. It implies that the reader needs a number of abilities to gain information a printed page. It includes skill in recognition words and their meaning, in grouping words into thought unit, therefore sentences may be understood. Meanwhile, Hughes (2003) mentions some reading activities of developing student's comprehension. They are: interpret topic and topic sentences, interpret complex sentence, identify implicitly and explicitly stated main ideas, identify the supporting details, interpret vocabulary, distinguish fact from opinion, distinguish general statements from examples etc. So, the activities in reading comprehension is interpret topic, topic sentence, complex sentence, implicitly and

explicitly stated main ideas, supporting details, vocabulary, general statements from example and fact from opinion.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that reading comprehension is an active process of gasp meaning from the content of the writer's idea about the topic in a text by coordinating a numbers of skills.

Comprehension is ability that can be differentiated into the levels. According to Heilman et. al (in Sari, 2016), the level of reading comprehension involves more of an active role on the part of the reader. Clymer (in Braswell and Rasinski, 2008) describes three levels of comprehension that are needed to be mastered. They are literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and critical comprehension.

First, literal comprehension or commonly called reading on the lines means understanding the stated meaning of the material. This level is the simplest level. At this level, questions are factual and detailed. The skills needed for this level are nothing factual data, sequence, chronology, and enumeration. In structured reading, three kinds of exercises have been designed especially to help readers develop their ability to read on the lines: "Vocabulary", "Central Theme and Main Ideas" and "Major Details".

Next, inferential comprehension means reading between the lines. This level requires the reader to go beyond the information given by the writer. Making inferences is sometimes called "reading between the lines." This means readers use the information in the text to guess other things about the text. They are required to see the significance of the data, to note various relationships such as cause effect and relation of the part to the whole, to make comparison, to draw conclusion and inference and to make generalization. It is often necessary to make inferences when someone read. Sometimes readers need to guess about information the writer has not put there. Other times they may need to guess about meaning when they do not know all the words. Good readers make inferences as the time as they read.

Finally, critical reading means reading beyond the lines. Critical reading can be defined as very high-level comprehension of written material requiring interpretation and evaluation skill that enable the reader to separate important from unimportant information, distinguish between facts and opinions, and determine a writer's purpose and tone. Critical reading also entails using inference to go beyond what is stated explicitly, filling in information gaps, and coming to logical conclusions. These various skills require much thought, and that is why critical reading is dependent on critical thinking.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the level of reading comprehension that included in implicit meaning were inferential comprehension and critical comprehension. It is supported by Kispal and Twist (2008), she stated that the ability to make inferences is, in simple terms, the ability to use two or more pieces of information from a text in order to arrive at a third piece of information that is implicit. In line with that, Wassman and Rinsky (2000) stated that in critical reading need to make inferences.

Method

This research was a quantitative descriptive research because it described students' ability in reading. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012) use term of survey research which is used to report the data as what they are. In addition, Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012) state that descriptive research involves collecting data in order to get the answer from the research questions concerning the status of the subject of the study. In this research, the data described and reported students' ability in comprehending reading text.

Since this research was aimed to see the ability of English Department students in understanding implicit meaning, the population of this research were the seventh semester students of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang who registered in 2016/2017 academic year. There are three parallel classes. The researcher used cluster random sampling as it is assumed that the students have the same knowledge about reading skill since they have passed all of reading courses provided by English Department of FBS UNP. K16-03 has been choosen as try out class and K16-01 as the sample class.

The instrument is used to collect the data related to the problems of the research in order to make the research easy to be measured. This study used reading test as the instrument. Reading test is important to know the ability of the students in reading. The students were given several passages of reading and answer several questions related to texts. It showed the students' ability from score that they got from the test. The test for this study was selected from several sources; Read Theory LLC, Reading Comprehension, Reading Comprehension Worksheets and Ereading Worksheet.

Furthermore, the reading test was tried out to class English K3-16 on August, 20th 2019. Then, the quality of the test items were seen based on item difficulty and reliability by using following formula:
Item Difficulty:

$$FV=R/N$$

Where:

FV   : Difficulty index

R   : Right number
N   : Number of students who taking a test
Difficulty Index Categories:
 0.00-0.30 : Difficult
 0.31-0.70 : Fair
 0.71-1.00 : Easy
Then, item reliability used Cronbach Alpha:

$$r = \left(\frac{n}{n-1}\right)\left(1\frac{\Sigma s}{s}\right)$$

Where:
 r   : coefficient reliability
 n   : the total item
 S   : the score variant of the item
 ΣS   : the total score of variant

Table 1. The Interval Data

Interval of Percentage	Category
109 – 135	Very good
82 – 108	Good
55 – 81	Moderate
28 – 54	Fair
0 – 27	Poor

There were 45 questions gave to the students. There were 10 questions are discarded because they were considered as too difficult and too easy questions.

Based on the instrumentation of the research, the data collected by delivering the reading test, since it was used to see students' ability in understanding implicit meaning in reading text. Then, in analysing the data, the result of students reading test was scored by researcher herself, since the answer of reading test are already provided by the author the book where she take the test.

Results and Discussion

The data of this research was taken from reading test to see the students' ability in understanding implicit meaning in reading text. The questions of the test consisted of 35 items that should be answered in 60 minutes by the students. There were 27 students who became the sample of this research. The scores of the students were collected from reading test. The distribution of the students' scores is given in the table below.

Table 2. Distribution of Students' Scores on Reading Test

Score	F	%
85-100	-	-
80-84	3	11.11
75-79	2	7.40
70-74	4	14.81
65-69	4	14.81
60-64	4	14.81
55-59	9	33.33
50-54	-	-
40-49	1	3.70
<39	-	-
Total of students	**27**	**100**

Students' Ability in Understanding Implicit Meaning in Reading Text

There are two types of meanings in implicit meaning; they are inferential meaning and critical meaning. There are 35 questions in reading test and they are divided into 22 questions of inferential and 13 questions of critical. The following is the distribution of the questions.

Table 3 Distribution of Implicit Meaning in Reading Test

No.	Types of Implicit Meaning	Questions Numbers	Total
1.	Inferential meaning	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 22, 25, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35	22
2.	Critical meaning	14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 28, 30	13
		Total	35

Students' ability in getting inference meaning in reading text

This study give information about students' ability in understanding inferential meaning in reading text. The results were based on the students' score in answering the reading test. The recapitulation of the students' score in category can be seen in the following table.

Table 4. The Percentage of Students' Scores in Inferential Meaning

Score	F	%	Category
85-100	1	3,70	High
80-84	5	18.51	
75-79	-	-	
70-74	3	11.11	Moderate
65-69	6	22.22	
60-64	3	11.11	
55-59	4	14.81	Low
50-54	3	11.11	
40-49	2	7.40	
<39	-	-	
Total of students	27	100	

From the table above, it is seen that seventh semester students of English departments was in moderate level, or about 44.44% of the students or 12 students got score in range 64-74. Then, there were only six students in high category with 22.21%. Finally, 9 students were in low category which gained 33.32%.

Students' ability in getting critical meaning in reading text

This study give information about students' ability in understanding critical meaning in reading text. The results were based on the students' score in answering the reading test. The recapitulation of the students' score in category can be seen in the following table.

Table 5. The Percentage of Students' Scores in Critical Meaning

Score	F	%	Category
85-100	1	3.70	High
80-84	4	14.81	
75-79	3	11.11	
70-74	-	-	Moderate
65-69	4	14.81	
60-64	8	29.62	
55-59	-	-	Low
50-54	5	18.51	
40-49	2	7.40	
<39	-	-	
Total of students	27	100	

From table above, it is seen that seventh semester students of English departments was in moderate level, or about 44.43% of the students or 12 students got score in range 64-74. Then, there were only 7 students in low category with 25.91%. Finally, 8 students were in high category which gained 29.62%.

Based on the data analysis above, the findings of this research can be explained as follows. First, in general, the students' ability in understanding the implicit meaning was moderate. It was seen from the score distribution obtained by the students. From 27 students taken as sample, nine students got scores 55-59 or 33.33 %, and 12 students got range scores from 60 to 74. The score table also indicates that no students got 85-100. In addition, only 5 students got range scores from 75 to 84. It means that the highest score is only A-. This finding confirms the result of Italia, Saun, and Fitrawati (2018). In their research, Italia, Saun, and Fitrawati (2018) has concluded that the reading ability of the fifth semester students of English Departments of Universitas Negeri Padang in academic year 2017/2018 is good enough, where the total mean of students' score is 66.72.

In addition, the students' ability in understanding the inferential meaning was moderate. It was seen from the score distribution obtained by the students. From 27 students taken as sample, 3 students got scores 70-74 or 11.11%, and 6 students got scores from 65 to 69. The score table also indicates that 3 students got 60-64. This finding was line with the research conducted by Husna, Roza, and Tanjung (2016). They confirmed that in general the students' ability to make inference was moderate. They conducted their research at Bung Hatta University with second semester students of English Department as their samples. Moreover, the students'

ability in understanding the critical meaning was also at moderate level. It was seen from the score distribution obtained by the students. From 27 students taken as sample, 8 students got scores 60-64 or 29.62%, and none got 70-74.

Conclusions

Based on the research findings in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that in general the students' ability in understanding the implicit meaning was moderate. It could be seen from the score distribution obtained by the students. From 27 students taken as sample, nine students got scores 55-59 or 33.33 %, and 12 students got range scores from 60 to 74. The table also indicates that no students got 85-100. In addition, only 5 students got range scores from 75 to 84.

Based on the conclusion stated above, it can be implied that students' ability in comprehending reading text, especially in understanding implicit meaning should be improved. Even though the students' ability in reading test was moderate, the researcher would like to propose the following suggestions. First, it is suggested that the students employ the more effective strategies in understanding implicit message. Second, reading lecturers were suggested to give more practices on inferential questions to the students in reading class or outside the classroom. The lecturer should be creative and innovative in using reading materials.

References

Attaprechakul, D. (2013). Inference Strategies to Improve Reading Comprehension of Challenging Texts. *English Language Teaching*, *6*(3). doi:10.5539/elt.v6n3p82

Cline, F., Johnstone., C & King, T. (2006). *Focus Group Reaction to Three Definition of Reading (as originally Developed in Support NARAP Goal I.* Minneapolis, M.N.: National Accessible Reading Assessment Project.

Commander, M., & Guerrero de, M. C. M. (2013). Reading as a Social Interactive Process: The Impact of Shadow-Reading in L2 classroom. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 25*(2), 170-191.

Gay, L. R., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. (2012). *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications*. New York, NY: Pearson Education Inc.

Goodman, J. S., & Wood, R. E. (2004). Feedback Specificity, Learning Opportunities, and Learning. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 89*(5), 809-821.

Hughes, A. (2002). *Testing for Language Teacher*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Italia, F., Saun, S., & Fitrawati. (2018). An Analysis of Students' Ability in Reading an Expository Text of the Fifth Semester Students in English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang. *Journal of English Language Teaching, 7*(1).

Kartawijaya, S. (2017). An Analysis of the Students' Reading Comprehension in Comprehending Descriptive Text. *Jurnal Curricula, 2*(3), 80.

Kispal, A., & Twist, L. (2008). Effective Teaching of inference Skills for Reading. *Research Report: National Foundation for Educational Research.*

Klingner, J. K., Vaughn, S., & Brodman, A. (2007). *Teaching Reading Comprehension to Students with Reading Learning Difficulties*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Nunan, D. (2003). *Practical English Language Teaching*. New York: McGraw-Hill Company, Inc.

Rahmawati, E. Y. (2018). Analysis of Students' English Reading Comprehension through KWL (Know-Want-Learn) Learning Strategies. *International Journal of Language Teaching and Education, 2*(3), 238.

Sari, D. P. (2016). An Analysis of Students' Reading Comprehension Based on the Four Levels Comprehension Skills (A Study at the Second Year Students of SMAN 10 Bengkulu Academic Year 2014/2015). *Linguists: Journal of Linguistics and Language Teaching, 3*(1).

Sriyati, S., Mukhaiyar, M., & Rosa, R. N. (2019). The effect of using INSERT strategy and motivation on the reading comprehension of the second grade students of SMPN 11 Sijunjung West Sumatera. *International Journal of Civil Engineering and Technology (IJCIET)*, 10(01), 1359-1368.

Wassman, R., & Rinsky, L. A. (2000). *Effective Reading in a Changing World*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Woolley, G. (2011). *Reading Comprehension Assisting Children with Learning Difficulties*. New York: Springer.