

ANALYSIS ON STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES OF FINDING MAIN IDEA OF A PASSAGE

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Abstract

This research was conducted to find students difficulties if getting main idea from a text and to know the students' perspective of reading activity to find main idea. The subject of this research was the third semester students of English Department of STKIP PGRI Nganjuk which was consisted of 27 students. For getting the data, the researcher used three techniques they were reading test, interview, and providing questionnaire. As the results of the test there were 9 students who had score in range of 65-75 with the total questions of 20 and the rest had score in range of 40-64. Based on the interview, the students' problems were about having low interest of reading, having low vocabulary mastery, the sentence structure which longer than what they usually read or construct, having poor reading strategy, and getting confused of grammatical structure used in the text. Based on the results of the questionnaire can be concluded that the third semester of English Department of STKIIP PGRI Nganjuk still had difficulties of getting main idea from a passage because mostly they did not understand with the vocabulary used in text so they could not determine the main idea of the passage.

Keywords: main idea, problems, reading comprehension

Introduction

Reading is one of four English skills which should be mastered of those who want to learn about English. By reading people are able to open their mind to get many information, knowledges, and reading also provide entertainment, especially for the students who still need developing their experiences of learning many things. Afflerbach (2007) stated that reading is a dynamic and complex process that involves skills, strategies and prior knowledge. It means that I reading process, students should have strategies to get the ideas and information easily. It is very important for foreign students to do because in reading English text students must have good vocabulary mastery to understand the information from the text. Bojovic (2010) explained that reading is rapid, which means that readers should maintain flow of information at a sufficient rate to make connections and inferences. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that in reading activity students should understand not only the explicit information which is stated clearly but also the implicit information which is got by concluding information stated in the text. Getting implicit information is one of the students

lack in doing reading activity. Getting implicit information can be one alternative to find main idea and other information from the text. So that is why in reading practice students need to have reading comprehension to understand what the text about. Reading comprehension is very crucial for university students because they need to have more knowledges about what they learn. Cooper (1986: 11) states that comprehension is a process in which a reader may construct meaning by interacting with the text. In other words, in doing reading activity students not only read the text but they also have to understand the content and the information that the writers want to share.

To measure the students' comprehension of reading, there should be a test conducted by providing some questions. Mostly reading comprehension test is conducted by providing some questions base on the text the students should read. The common types of reading comprehension test are about identifying main idea, main point, the writer's purpose or an alternate title for the passage, recognizing the tone of the passage or identifying the style, comprehending information directly stated in passage (finding supporting details), answer relational questions about the author's opinion, even if not stated directly, recognizing the structural methodology employed to develop the passage, for example sequence, vocabulary, and represent pronoun (reference), and extending limited information given by the author to logical conclusion using inference (inference meaning) (Devenport, 2007: 61). From this explanation, it can be seen that determining main idea is also important in reading comprehension. Main idea is what the most information the writer intent to share in the text. Understanding main idea is important because main idea is like a key of the text so when the readers get the key then they will be easier to grab the information from the whole text.

As the key of a text, main ideas are expressed explicitly and also implicitly. Explicitly means that the main idea is expressed directly and clearly, it can be in the first paragraph, middle, or in the end of the paragraph. In this condition the main idea is usually fairly straightforward to identify. Students are able to find the main idea easily because it can be clearly identified as the sentence which contain the core of the information in the paragraph. It will be little bit difficult when the students should construct the main idea by their own because the main idea is

stated implicitly. This is what the students mostly confused to construct a main idea based on the information they read from the text. To construct the main idea firstly the students should read the whole text or paragraph to understand what actually the text about. When they read the whole text, they also got some difficulties before they finally highlight some important information. The problems which are faced by students when they conduct reading activity and finding main idea can be caused by some problems like having low vocabulary mastery, getting bored because they have to read the whole text which they do not know the meaning of some terms used in the text, and many other problems that may come when they read a text.

Based on the explanation above the researcher need to analyze what actually the students' problem in constructing main idea from a text or paragraph. Besides, the researcher also wants to find what the students think about reading activity especially in finding main idea. This research was conducted at the third semester students of English Department of STKIP PGRI Nganjuk.

Research Method

This research was used non-experimental method with case study design. The researcher used case study design to find the problems which were faced by third semester of English Department of STKIP PGRI Nganjuk. The researcher tried to describe the students' difficulties of finding main ideas from a passage and how the students did their reading practice then concluding how their perception towards the reading activity.

The researcher selected the third semester of English Department of STKIP PGRI Nganjuk as the participant of this research because the researcher taught them for two reading lectures, they are Reading Comprehension II and Reading Comprehension III, so that was why the researcher had observed the students reading activity then conducted a research based on the observation results. The students of third semester of English Department of STKIP PGRI Nganjuk consisted of 27 students.

To collect the data, the researcher used three techniques, they are reading test, interview to the students, and giving questionnaire to the students. Reading

test was give to the students to identify their comprehension of finding main idea form a text by calculate their reading scores. It also to know the influence of genre text to the students, comprehension of finding the main idea. Then the researcher did interview to the students to get more information about their reading comprehension and their problems when they conducted reading practice. In doing interview the researcher did not interview all the students, the researcher just chose those who had low score of reading comprehension. It is aimed to clearly identify what actually their problem in finding main idea personally. The researcher prepared some questions which were related to the reading comprehension and it also could be developed when they did the interview. The last was questionnaire which was designed as an open questionnaire. It was used to collect the descriptive data from the students about their problems and perception about reading activity. After getting the data from test, interview, and questionnaire then the researcher started to analyze the data by using qualitative research.

Results and Discussion

This research was conducted to answer the questions about what the students' problem of finding main idea in a text and what the students' perception about reading activity. In determining the students' problem in finding main idea, the researcher tried to conduct an interview with some students who had low score of reading comprehension test. From 27 students there were 18 students who had low reading score, it was in range of 40-64. The students who had low score were interviewed outside the class to build their concentration. The researcher assumed that the students who had low score of reading means that they had problems in reading comprehension especially in getting main idea form the passage. In interviewing the students, the researcher provides ten questions which represented what problems actually they faced in reading practice. The questions were also extended based on the situation if the students need more treatment in describing their problems. The researcher also recorded and noted the information got from the interview to be analyzed after the interview done. The following are the results of the interview:

Table 1: Result of the Interview

No	Students' Problems	Frequency
1	Having low interest of reading	7
2	Having low vocabulary mastery	18
3	Problem with sentence structure and length	12
4	Having poor reading strategy	9
5	Getting confused of grammatical use	11

From the data above it can be seen some problems faced by the students to find main idea from a text with the frequency of the students' responses. There are 7 students who stated that they have low interest of reading activity (38.9%). They said that reading was a boring activity but it did not obtain to the genre which presented reading for entertainment. Then there are 18 students (100%) who have problem in understanding text because of limited vocabulary they master. This problem is faced by all of the students who are interviewed by the researcher. They stated that they could not absorb the information even the main idea of the text because they did not know the meaning of many vocabularies used in the text. Especially when the text is kind of a scientific text which provides many scientific terms and of course it needs more efforts to be understood. There are 12 student (66.7%) who have problem with the structure and the length of the sentence. It is little bit similar with the problem of vocabulary mastery which push the students to draw an understanding about the information form the sentences. They thought that the longer sentences are more difficult to be understood. reading strategy is also a crucial for the students to find main idea and other information from the text. There are 9 students (50%) who are still confused about the appropriate strategy of reading. And the last one is the problem of grammatical use, there are 11 students (61.1%) who are confused with the grammatical structure used in the paragraph.

Beside doing an interview to the students who have low reading comprehension, the researcher also provided questionnaire for all the students of third semester of English Department of STKIP PGRI Nganjuk. It was conducted to analyze the problems faced by the students in finding main idea. Here the interpretation of the data results of interview and questionnaire:

1. Having low interest of reading activity

In conducting reading activity, the first that the students need is having good interesting in reading, in the activity or the text that they are going to read. The main point is when the students having low interest in reading, they will not provide any attention to the materials they read. For those who have lack of interest in reading, reading is just a boring activity which push them to stay concentrate to a text and try to understand what they read from the text. In interview activity, the result shows that there are 7 students who have low interest in reading. The researcher tried to clarify what actually their problem with the interest in reading, most of them explained that their interest in reading depend on what the genre of the text or what the text about. They stated that the genre of the text very influences their mood in reading especially the topic the text provided. When they find an appropriate genre and topic, they will have good mood and get more interest to read the text then answer the questions. It will be in different condition when they have genre and topic like what they want, they will be more active and excited with the reading activity. Most of them are interested in light genre like narrative, recount, spoof, descriptive, and procedures text with the interesting topic depend on what they like. The students' interest in reading of course affect their quality of reading activity because they just want to read what they like but when they have reading activity in the class or reading test, they have to read what have been prepared. Bouchamma, et al (2013: 488) explained their research results about the impact of reading preferences on reading achievement which showed that the students with will have good achievement when they read what they like. It seems similar with the case of the third students of English Department of STKIP PGRI Nganjuk which have preference in reading activity.

2. Having low vocabulary mastery

Vocabulary is one of the language components which affect the macro skills. This is the problem which faced by most of the third students of English Department of STKIP PGRI Ngajuk both those which have good score and

low score in reading test given by the researcher. From the results of interview and questionnaire, it was showed that the students get difficulties in understanding the information and concluding main idea because they have lack of vocabulary mastery. Vocabulary is the most important aspect to learn a new language because vocabulary is the basic elements of language to express any idea. Hatch and Brown (1995: 1) implied that vocabulary is the foundation of building language which plays fundamental role in communication. It means that to understand English especially in reading activity, the students need to master the English vocabulary as the basic of learning English and communicate using English. From 18 students who have low score of reading test and being interviewed by the researcher, there are 18 students also who have problem with vocabulary. They explained that they did less practice of English so they did not have any references to build their vocabulary. Besides, when they read a scientific text with many scientific terms, they are confused to understand it. English is different from Indonesian but the students always translate English with Indonesian style. That is why they have got misunderstanding when concluding information and constructing main idea from the text.

3. Problems with sentence structure and length

Students who have low score in reading stated that one of the problems they face in reading practice is understanding ideas which are stated in long sentences. From 18 students who have been interviewed by the researcher, there are 12 students who have problem in understanding information from long sentence. They explained that understanding main idea from long sentences is more difficult because they have to consider many ideas or terms form the sentences. It become more chaos when they also have problem with vocabulary mastery and sentences structure. Both sentence structure and length are related to the students reading comprehension. When they read to find main idea, they have to focus to the topic of the text to help them of getting lost in long sentences. One of their problem when reading long sentence is getting lost of finding subject or object of the sentences. Sometimes, long sentences provide phrases like noun phrase and adjective

phrases which affect the students in finding subject or the object of the sentences. In addition, the structure of English sentences are different from Indonesian which means the students sometimes getting confused in interpreting the information.

4. Having poor reading strategy

Strategy is crucial in any activity including in finding main idea through reading activity. Brown (2007: 119) defines strategies as the specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information. From the explanation about strategies, it can be concluded that reading strategies are specific method to read a text which purposes to get information from the text. Actually, in reading lecture it has been covered about reading strategy and students have been directed to practice the strategy in reading activity. But they have lack of practices so that is why they do not know how to construct main idea and they are not familiar with the text structure. Students did not know that having prior knowledge about the topic presented in the text could help them to build understanding text and constructing main idea. Sometimes, main ideas are stated implicitly and just provided with some clues to push the reader to draw inferences. Drawing inferences is also a strategy for the students to find main idea from the text and to achieve depth understanding of the text. In practicing reading, the students have been pressured by the time and the rules given by the lecturer. They just started to read the questions and run to the text to read quickly to find the answer. They forget that they also need to understand the text to get the best answer for the questions. Most of the students just write down the sentence from the text which contains the idea as the answer of the questions without considering the suitability of the content with the questions. For example, when the question asks about where the Mona lives but Mona is stated as the first person with the pronoun of "I" then students also answer the question using "I". From the example, it can be seen that students are able to identify the information related to the questions, but they do not have depth understanding to express the answer properly. Those, students need more

strategy to have depth understanding in reading a text especially in finding main idea.

5. Getting confused of grammatical used

Grammatical use is also become one problem for the students in case to find mind idea from a text. The students with low level of grammatical skill will have difficulties in understanding sentences in a text. From the interview session there were 11 students who had problem deals with grammatical use. Grammatical structure helps writer to express their idea clearly. It is commonly used as the signal to differ meaning of the sentences to reduce readers confusion. According to Fender (2001), noticed that grammatical knowledge is important to the comprehension of texts in that is essential to coherence building, as well as to word integration for establishing propositional meanings that enable text model construction and integration. This statement implied that students need to have good ability of grammatical structure to conduct an easy reading practice and be able to receive the information from the text. Most of the third students of English Department of STKIP PGRI Nganjuk get confused in interpreting the meaning of the sentences. They explained that the structure used in the text were complex and sometimes they have to read more than twice to get the point.

Conclusion and Recommendation

From the research results and discussion above, it can be concluded:

1. Most of the students of third semester of English Department of STKIP PGRI Nganjuk still have difficulties in finding main idea and other information from text. It can be seen from the result of the reading test conducted by the researcher which shown that there are 18 students from 20 who have reading score in range of 40-64 and just 9 students who have score in range of 65-75.
2. Based on the interview and questionnaire provided by the researcher, the third students of English Department of STKIP PGRI Nganjuk have problems in reading. There are 7 students who stated that they have low interest of reading

activity (38.9%). Then there are 18 students (100%) who have problem in understanding text because of limited vocabulary they master. There are 12 student (66.7%) who have problem with the structure and the length of the sentence. There are 9 students (50%) who are still confused about the appropriate strategy of reading. And then the problem of grammatical use, there are 11 students (61.1%) who are confused with the grammatical structure used in the paragraph.

3. The third students of English Department of STKIP PGRI Nganjuk need more practice of reading. Most of them still have low interest in reading, especially in joining reading test or reading activity in reading class, because those activity provide different genre text which they are not interested in. They also need more reading practice to improve their vocabulary mastery. Based on the research result, it is showed that most of the third students of English Department of STKIP PGRI Nganjuk have limited vocabulary knowledge whereas vocabulary is the basic knowledge for those who want to learn a new language.

Based on the conclusion above, the researcher provides some recommendations for the lecturer, students, and the other researchers as follows:

1. For lecturer: It is very crucial for the lecturer to select appropriate reading materials to build the students motivation in joining reading activity. Besides giving motivation directly to the students, the lecturer also needs to bring the reading activity in line with the students' condition. Building a good atmosphere in reading activity will help the students to blow their mood and motivation in joining reading activity.
2. For students: To achieving reading comprehension, students need to have more practice. They can practice by their own using simple text and reading their favorite genre. It is the alternative for them who have problem with reading interest. By reading favorite genre, students are also more interested to build their vocabulary mastery. That is the simplest way to make them aware about the important of doing practice in learning language skill.
3. For the other researcher: This research purposes to find the students' difficulties of finding main idea from a passage which based on the research

result the other researcher can do an analysis to solve those problems by conducting experimental research to test a method or developing a new method and media to help students improve their reading comprehension easily.

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