A STUDY ON THE ABILITY OF THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS OF SMP NEGERI 1 PEKANBARU IN COMPREHENDING DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS

Afrita Herneti, Supriusman, Dahnilsyah
Email: afrita.herneti@student.unri.ac.id, supri62@yahoo.co.id, danil_71@yahoo.com
Contac: 081364412021

Student of English Study Program
Language and Arts Department
Teachers Training and Education Faculty
Universitas Riau

Abstract: This research was aimed at finding out the reading ability of the first year students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru in comprehending descriptive texts. The population of this research was the first year students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru. The number of sample was 34 students selected by using cluster random sampling technique. The instrument to collect the data was multiple choice test items with 30 questions. Each text consists of 6 questions which cover the components of reading and the components of descriptive namely finding main ideas, finding factual information, finding meaning of vocabulary words, finding references, finding inferences and finding social functions. The data were analyzed by classifying them into five levels of ability: very poor, poor, mediocre, good and excellent. Based on the findings of this research, it was found that the students' reading ability of the first year students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru in comprehending descriptive texts was in good level with the mean score was 61. The implication of this research is that the first year students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru have a good ability in reading descriptive texts.

Key Words: Students' ability, Reading, Descriptive Texts.

PENELITIAN TENTANG KEMAMPUAN SISWA SMP NEGERI 1 PEKANBARU DALAM PEMAHAMAN TEKS DESKRIPTIF

Afrita Herneti, Supriusman, Dahnilsyah
Email: afrita.herneti@student.unri.ac.id, supri62@yahoo.co.id, danil_71@yahoo.com
Nomor HP: 081364412021

Mahasiswa Program Studi Bahasa Inggris
Jurusan Bahasa dan Seni
Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan
Universitas Riau

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kemampuan membaca siswa tahun pertama SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru dalam memahami teks deskriptif. Populasi penelitian ini adalah siswa tahun pertama SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru. Jumlah sampel adalah 34 siswa yang dipilih dengan menggunakan teknik cluster random sampling. Instrumen untuk mengumpulkan data adalah soal tes pilihan ganda dengan 30 pertanyaan. Setiap teks terdiri dari 6 pertanyaan yang meliputi komponen bacaan dan komponen deskriptif yaitu menemukan gagasan utama, menemukan informasi faktual, menemukan makna kata yang sulit, menemukan referensi, menemukan inferens dan menemukan fungsi sosial. Data dianalisis mengklasifikasikan kemampuan mereka ke dalam lima tingkat penguasaan, seperti sangat rendah, rendah, menengah, baik dan sangat baik. Berdasarkan temuan penelitian ini, ditemukan bahwa kemampuan membaca siswa siswa tahun pertama SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru dalam memahami teks deskriptif berada di tingkat yang baik dengan skor rata-rata adalah 61. Implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah bahwa siswa tahun pertama SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru memiliki kemampuan yang baik dalam membaca teks deskriptif.

Kata Kunci: Kemampuan Siswa, Membaca, Teks Deskriptif

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the important skills for the students in learning English. Reading is the way for students to get information from the written text and words. Linse (2005) state that reading is a set of skills that involves making sense and deriving meaning from the printed words. Basically, the purpose of reading process is to acquire information, knowledge, insight, and also for the pleasure of interest that is gotten from reading materials. Reading is not easy to do because in a reading process the reader not only reads the words, sentences, paragraphs, and texts but also should understand the contents of reading.

To get information from English sources, the student must be able to read English texts effectively and efficiently. Alfassi (2004) states that students should understand the meaning of text, critically evaluate the message, remember the content, and apply the new-found knowledge flexibly. Reading determines how students are able to think, that it has a fundamental effect on the development of the imagination. Furthermore, Nunan (2003) defined that reading is not only a source of information and a pleasureble activity but also as a means of consolidating and extending one's knowledge.

According to the 2013 curriculum, students in the Junior High School are given some activities related to reading such as reading English textbooks, reading the materials from newspapers, magazines, and the internet, and even answering questions in the examination. Based on the curriculum for the first year students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru there is only one genre of texts that be learned by the students. The kind of text they are learn is descriptive text is a kind of text describing a thing, animal, and person to get information from the text. Djuharie (2007) stated that descriptive text describes a person, thing place or animal. The purpose of the text is to describe a person, thing, place or animal to the readers in order to know the characteristics of a person, a thing, a place or an animal clearly.

Based on the writer's interview with the English teacher of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru, the students of this school faced some problems in reading. She said that students were mostly passive in teaching learning process, especially in reading class. It happens because most of them could read but not all of them could understand what they have read because of limited vocabulary. So the students could not catch the ideas of reading materials and it was difficult for them to get the writer's message from the text.

In addition, there are some students who didn't reach the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM). The passing grade for English subject at SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru is 82. There were some students who got below the score of 82 to include some students who still have the problem in comprehending English texts, such as descriptive texts, narrative texts and recount texts. Furthermore, by reading the texts, students will know the author's idea and his objective by reading the texts.

In this case, the writer needs to find out about the real condition of students' ability level in comprehending descriptive texts as well as the component or reading comprehension and also the ability level in comprehending descriptive texts for each component. These are the reasons why the writer motivated in conducted a research which is entitled: A Study on Ability of the First Year Students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru in Comprehending Descriptive Texts.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive research which has only one variable that describes the ability of the first year students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru in comprehending descriptive texts. According to Gay, Mills, and Peter (2009), descriptive research is the collection and analysis numerical data to describe, explain, predict or control phenomena of interest.

The specific objective of this study is to discover the ability of the first year students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru in comprehending descriptive texts. In terms of comprehending main ideas, finding factual information, meaning of vocabulary words, references, inferences, and social functions.

In this research, the writer used a test as the instrument to collect the data. The test consists of 30 items. The duration time for doing the test was 60 minutes. Before the writer distributed the test to the sample class, the test was tried out to some population that was chosen as the try out class.

The population of this research is the first year students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru. It has five classes. They are Hang Jebat class (VII-HJ), Hang Kasturi class (VII-HK), Hang Lekir class (VII-HL), Hang Nadim class (VII-HN), and Hang Tuah class (VII-HT). The number of population is 165 students.

According to Gay (2000), if the population is large and spread out in an intact group that has similar characteristic, cluster spreading is useful. Cluster sampling is a sampling technique where the entire population is divided into groups, or clusters and a random sample of these clusters are selected.

After distributing the test to the students in class who will be chosen as the samples, the writer analyzes the data in order to know their ability in comprehending descriptive texts. Furthermore, the level of the student's score in comprehending English texts can be classified into four levels of mastery. The classification can be seen in this following table:

Table 1. The Classification of Students' Ability

Classification Score	Ability Level
81 – 100	Excellent
61 – 80	Good
41 – 60	Mediocre
21 – 40	Poor
0 - 20	Very poor

(Harris, 1974)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The specific objective of this research is to find out the ability of the first year students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru in comprehending descriptive texts. The writer classified the questions in some components that help students in comprehending the texts. There are finding main idea, factual information, meaning of vocabulary words,

references, inferences, and social functions of descriptive texts. The result of the research can be described as follows:

Table 2 Percentage Of The Students' Ability in Reading Descriptive Texts

No	Range Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ability	Mean Score
1	81-100	6	17.64	Excellent	
2	61- 80	16	47.05	Good	
3	41-60	5	14.70	Mediocre	61
4	21-40	6	17.64	Poor	
5	0-20	1	2.94	Very poor	
	Total	34	100		

Table 2 shows that 6 students (17.64%) in reading descriptive texts are in *Excellent* level, 16 students (47.05%) are in *Good* level, 5 students (14.70%) are in *Mediocre* level, 6 students (17.64%) are in *Poor* level and 1 student (2,94%) is in *Very Poor* level.

In short, the mean score of the students in comprehending descriptive texts is 61. It can be stated that the ability of the first year students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru in comprehending descriptive texts in *Good* level (61). It means that most of the students are classified in *Good* level.

Table 3 Students' Scores and Their Level of Ability in Finding Main Ideas

No	Range Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ability	Mean Score
1	81-100	20	58.82	Excellent	
2	61- 80	2	5.88	Good	
3	41-60	8	23.52	Mediocre	82
4	21-40	2	5.88	Poor	
5	0-20	2	5.88	Very poor	
	Total	34	100		

Table 3 shows that 20 students (58.82%) in finding main ideas are in *Excellent* level, 2 students (5.88%) in *Good* level, 8 students (23.52%) are in *Mediocre* level, 2 students (5.88%) are in *Poor* level, and 2 students (5.88%) are in *Very Poor* level. The researcher finds out that the students' mean score in finding main ideas is 82. It can be concluded that the ability of the first year students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru in comprehending descriptive texts, in term of finding main ideas is in *Excellent* level.

Table 4. Students' Scores and Their Level of Ability in Finding Factual Information

No	Range Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ability	Mean Score
1	81-100	6	17.64	Excellent	
2	61- 80	7	20.58	Good	
3	41-60	9	26.47	Mediocre	60
4	21-40	6	17.64	Poor	
5	0-20	6	17.64	Very poor	
	Total	34	100		

Table 4 shows that 6 students (17.64%) in finding factual information are in *Excellent* level, 7 students (20.58) in *Good* level, 9 students (26.47%) are in *Mediocre* level, 6 students (17.64) are in *Poor* level, and 6 students (17.64) are in *Very Poor* level. The researcher finds out that the students' mean in finding factual information is 60, and it is in *Mediocre* level. It means that there are some students in *Good* level and some in *Poor* level.

Table 5. Students' Score and Their Level of Ability in Finding Meaning of Vocabulary Words

No	Range Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ability	Mean Score
1	81-100	0	0	Excellent	
2	61- 80	3	8.82	Good	
3	41-60	7	20.58	Mediocre	39
4	21-40	10	29.41	Poor	
5	0-20	14	41.17	Very poor	
	Total	34	100		

Table 5 shows that No student (0%) in finding meaning of vocabulary words is in *Excellent* level, 3 students (8.82%) in *Good* level, 7 students (20.58%) are in *Mediocre* level, 10 students (29.41%) are in *Poor* level, and 14 students (41.17%) are in *Very Poor* level. The researcher finds out that the students' mean score in finding meaning of vocabulary words is 39. It can be concluded that the students' ability in finding meaning of vocabulary words is in *Poor* level, they have to learn more to get good ability in finding meaning of vocabulary words.

Table 6 Students' Score and Their Level of Ability in Finding References

No	Range Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ability	Mean Score
1	81-100	1	2.94	Excellent	
2	61- 80	8	23.52	Good	
3	41-60	13	38.23	Mediocre	54
4	21-40	6	17.64	Poor	
5	0-20	6	17.64	Very poor	
	Total	34	100		

Table 6 shows that 1 student (2.94%) in finding references is in *Excellent* level, 8 students (23.52%) in *Good* level, 13 students (38.23%) are in *Mediocre* level, 6 students (17.64%) are in *Poor* level, and 6 students (17.64%) are in *Very Poor* level. From the data above, the researcher can find out that the students' mean score in finding references in 54. It can be concluded that the students' ability in finding references is in *Mediocre* level. It means that the students' level in finding references is still need improvement to get best result.

Table 7 Students' Scores and Their Level of Ability in Finding Inferences

No	Range Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ability	Mean Score
1	81-100	9	26.47	Excellent	
2	61- 80	13	38.23	Good	
3	41-60	4	11.76	Mediocre	68
4	21-40	1	2.94	Poor	
5	0-20	7	20.58	Very poor	
	Total	34	100		

Table 7 shows that 9 students (26.47%) in finding inferences are in *Excellent* level, 13 students (38.23%) in *Good* level, 4 students (11.76%) are in *Mediocre* level, 1 student (2.94%) is in *Poor* level, and 7 students (20.58%) are in *Very Poor* level. The researcher finds out that the students' mean score in finding inferences is 68. It can be concluded that the students' ability in finding inferences is in *Good* level.

Table 8 Students' Scores and Their Level of Ability in Finding Social Function

No	Range Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ability	Mean Score
1	81-100	7	20.58	Excellent	
2	61- 80	9	26.47	Good	
3	41-60	5	14.70	Mediocre	65
4	21-40	11	32.35	Poor	
5	0-20	2	5.88	Very poor	
	Total	34	100		

Table 8 shows that 7 students (20.58%) in finding social functions are in *Excellent* level, 9 students (26.47%) are in *Good* level, 5 students (14.70%) are in *Mediocre* level, 11 students (32.35%) are in *Poor* level, and 2 students (5.88%) are in *Very Poor* level. The researcher finds out that the students' mean in finding social functions is 65, in *Good* level. It means that 18 students have to learn more to get good ability in finding social functions.

Table 9 The Classification of Students' Mean Score in Comprehending Descriptive Texts

No	The Classification of the Question	Mean Score	Level 0f Ability
1	Finding Main Ideas	82	Excellent
2	Finding Factual Information	60	Mediocre
3	Finding Meaning of Vocabulary Words	39	Poor
4	Finding References	54	Mediocre
5	Finding Inferences	68	Good
6	Finding Social Functions	65	Good
	Mean Score	61	Good

Table 9 shows that of 6 components of comprehending descriptive texts, the mean score of finding main ideas (82) is classified into *Excellent*, the mean score of finding factual information (60) is classified into *Mediocre*, the mean score of finding meaning of vocabulary words (39) is classified into *Poor*, the mean score of finding references (54) is classified into *Mediocre*, the mean score of finding inferences (68) is classified into *Good*, and the mean score of finding social functions (65) is classified into *Good*. Besides that the mean score ability of the students based on the table is *Good*. From all the data, it can be inferred that the students' ability in comprehending descriptive texts by the first year students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru is in good level.

Discussion

In reading comprehension test, the mean score of the first year students' ability of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru in reading descriptive texts is 61 and was analyzed by Heaton (1975) formula. Besides that, 6 students were in *Excellent* level. Then, there were 16 students categorized into *Good* level. 5 students were categorized into *Mediocre* level. 6 students were categorized into *Poor* level and 1 student was categorized into *Very Poor* level. It means that they classified into had good ability in reading descriptive texts. Students may be satisfied with this result, but they still need to practice more in reading comprehension, especially in comprehending descriptive texts.

In this research, the students' ability from each reading component can be described as follows: one component is in *Excellent* level, two components are in *Good* level, two components are in *Mediocre* level, and one component is in *Very Poor* level. The most difficult component to comprehend in descriptive texts is in term of finding meaning of vocabulary with score 39. On the other hand, the medium aspects of reading comprehension were finding factual information with the mean score 60 and finding references with score 54. Meanwhile, the easiest aspects of reading comprehension were finding main ideas with the mean score 82, finding inferences with the mean score 68. And finding social functions with the mean score 65.

The data show that the lowest aspect in reading comprehension is in finding meaning of vocabulary words. The students should develop their meaning ability of vocabulary words which is difficult for them, by relating the close meaning of difficult words to the text. In this case, they got the lowest score because the lack of vocabulary words and comprehension skill of the students. So, if the students do not master the vocabulary words well they will find it hard to understand and comprehend the texts. Reading skill also plays an important role in a language. By reading, author can give or send the message to the readers in order to gain information. Someone who has skill in reading will find it easy to gain information directly and quickly, (Nuttal 1982). Otherwise, learners lack knowledge of reading will face difficulties in understanding the reading.

Based on the previous discussion, the researcher analyzes that the first year students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru can be categorized at good level in comprehending descriptive texts, but the students still need more practice in comprehending descriptive texts. Even though the mean score is classified as *Good* level, but only few of students reach the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) of the school.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusions

After conducting research entitled *A Study on the Ability of the First Year Students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru in Comprehending Descriptive Texts,* the conclusions can be drawn. The writer gets the score of the students from the results of the test. The score of students falls into *Good* level. It can be concluded that of the 34 students, 6 students were in *Excellent* level, 16 students were in *Good* level, 5 students were in *Mediocre* level, 6 students were in *Poor* level and 1 student was in *Very Poor* level.

The mean score of the students' ability in comprehending descriptive texts is 61. It means that the ability of the first year students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru in comprehending descriptive texts is in good level. On the other words, the result of this research found that the ability of the first year students of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru could not be achieved the Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) of the school.

Recommendation

It was believed this research has lot of weaknesses. However, from the research findings, the writer would like to give three recommendations as follows: first, the students' ability is in good level, according to KKM of SMP Negeri 1 Pekanbaru, the students' score are still far from KKM. So, English teachers are expected to focus on the components that students still find difficulties. The teacher should have efforts to develop students' motivation and encourages them to practice in reading comprehension.

Second, the students should learn the components of comprehending descriptive texts that will help them in comprehend other reading texts. In term of finding main ideas, the students should understand how the paragraph is developed and get the important point of the texts. In term of finding factual information, the students should be able scan specific information of the texts. In term of finding meaning of vocabulary words, the students should develop their ability in vocabulary words which are difficult for them, especially related to the close meaning of difficult words to the texts. In term of finding references, the students should be able to identify the words. In term of finding inferences, the students should understand the meaning of information of the texts. The last, in term of finding social function of the texts, students should know why the texts are written by the writer.

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