Evaluating Eighth Grade Students' Reading Comprehension Proficiency at SMP Trisakti 1 Medan

Author Name: **Nova Florentina Ambarwati**

Affiliation: Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas

Contact Information: nova.fio82@gmail.com

Abstract

The objective of the research is to describe the ability of the eighth-grade students in reading comprehension. This research is quantitative research. The population of the research is the eighth-grade students amounting to 150 students for five classes. As many 50 students are taken as a sample which is randomly taken chosen from each class. The instrument of collecting data was a test. Try out test was done in order to know the item difficulty, validity, reliability of test items. From the real test the writer found that Minimal Criterion Mastery in the subject of English Language was 77, and it was only 5 students got score above 77. It means based on the Minimal Criterion Mastery the eighth-grade students of SMP Trisakti 1 Medan are unable yet on doing reading comprehension. The table shows that the percentage of the ability on reading comprehension is 29.25%. Thus, the students are suggested to study more on the subject reading to do well on the test. The teacher is also expected to give an explanation of the materials for readings.

Keywords: *Reading Comprehension, Students' Ability*

Introduction

English is an international language that is used by people to communicate in the world and it plays an important role in our life. Almost all countries have adopted English as a compulsory subject at schools. The national education has decided that English as a foreign language is taught in Indonesian schools. It is learned starting from primary schools up to university. In Indonesia, English subject has been included in the curriculum from Junior High School and also as the one subject that is examined in the National Examination. It means that English cannot be ignored by the students. In learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia, the students are supposed to master the four language skills in order to use English well. Those are listening, speaking, reading and writing. They are equally important because those skill are related to each other.

One of receptive language skills is reading. Reading is such an activity in which people get information, knowledge, and ideas from written texts.
Reading is an important way which can improve the students' general skill in English. It can improve the vocabulary, and the writing. According to the statement, the students can get

information and can support other skills in English by applying reading skill. According to Brown (2001:136), a person must be able to understand what the author writes in order to be an effective reader. It means that the readers have to catch the information, today almost all of the students that I have been thought only read but this include cognitive capacities, motivation, and various types of knowledge. In order to produce good ability in reading comprehension, a student needs to use appropriate method or technique in reading.

Reading comprehension is a process of reading and comprehending a text. Specially, in reading process, the reader must comprehend the text. If the readers read the text and comprehend the message and the meaning of the text, they comprehend a text. According to Klingner, et al (2007:4), reading comprehension is the processes of constructing meaning by coordinating number of complex processes that includes word reading, word knowledge, motivation, reading goals, language abilities and fluency.

Reading comprehension is not merely a process of recognizing understanding words and the meanings. It involves a more complex cognitive process where students could understand the meaning of written language.

Reading comprehension is one of the keys to success for the students. They do not only get knowledge from the school, but also by reading process in everyday life. Reading is one of language skills which most of the students usually worry about. They worry if they do not know the meaning or they cannot understand what is actually written. Reading comprehension is so important for students, and it is needed when students have to read several texts and to answer several questions, especially on English subject.

Besides, the students felt bored and they had mindset that reading activity was not interesting. They could not pronounce, spell, identify, and understand all words in any kind of text. They did not know what the text tells about, and then there are many unfamiliar words, difficulties in finding the main idea, the meaning of word phrases and sentences in the text.

Based on the background of the study above, the problems of the study are:

1. How is the students' ability on reading comprehension of SMP Trisakti 1 Medan in academic year of 2022/2023?.
2. How many students reach the Minimal Criterion Mastery of SMP Trisakti1 Medan in academic year of 2022/2023?.

The objectives of the study are:

1. to find out and to knowthe students' ability of SMP Trisakti 1 Medan on reading comprehension.
2. to find out and to know how many students reach the Minimal Criterion Mastery of SMP Trisakti 1 Medan.

Literature Review

The Definition of Ability

Ability is the capacity or power to perform act, physical and mental, especially for academic field. Ability is also defined as cleverness and intelligence. Ability is the quality or state of being able in doing something. According to Robbins (2007: 118), capability consists of two factors;

a) Intellectual Ability

Intellectual ability is the skills needed to perform a variety of mental activity thinking, reasoning and problem solving.

b) Physical Ability

Physical Ability is the ability to perform tasks that require stamina, skills, strengths, and similar characteristics. According to Carroll (1993:117), although the term ability is in common usage in both everyday talk and in scientific discussions, its precise definition is seldom explicated or even considered. Ability can also be called "competence" which means ability, power, skills knowledge, and skills abilities. Competence is a combination of three educational domains which include: the real knowledge skills and attitude that form the patterns of thinking and acting in everyday life.

Reading

Reading is a crucial skill for students of English whether it is a second language or a foreign language. Reading still plays a great role and it is essential as a tool to convey meaning and information through the text. According to Pandiangan, Sari, and Ginting (2020:163), Reading is one of the skills that should   be mastered by students. By reading students get knowledge and information or ideas from what they have read. It means when students read a text, they must be able to get the important information or message from the text. It needs comprehension to get meaning or to get information conveyed by the writer.

Types of reading

According to Patel and Jain (2008:117), there are four types of reading, those are intensive reading, extensive reading, extensive reading, aloud reading and silent reading.

a. Intensive Reading

Intensive reading is related to further progress in language learning under the teacher's guidance. Intensive reading will provide a basis for explaining difficulties of structure and extending knowledge of vocabulary, idioms studying the grammar and expression in the text, translating the passage or other tasks that involve the students in looking intensively into the text. It will also provide material for developing greater control of the language in speech and writing. It means that intensive reading is done to get specific information. The goal of this reading is active use of language.

b. Extensive Reading

According to Mikulecky (2008:3), extensive reading is a highly individualized approach to reading improvement. Students select their own books and read at their own pace. The teacher should guide students to select books at a level of comprehension that allows for comprehensible input. The emphasis is on the quantity of books read and the students' enjoyment of their books. Students are never tested formally on their extensive reading.

c. Reading Aloud

Reading aloud is usually used to check the pronunciation the students. In reading aloud, the students are confronted with written sentences which have not spoken before. Teacher can ask students to read a text and give them a score to show their progress.

Wilson (2006:6) states that reading aloud has a remarkable effect on children. It enhances children's skill, interests and development in many ways that reach far beyond just improving their own reading interest and abilities. One of the main intensions of reading aloud is to recognize the sounds of words; however, teachers may also vary their activities to develop their students' reading comprehension. The teachers may ask some questions after the students have read the text. When one student is reading aloud, the teacher asks the other students to pay attention to the text rather than just listen to how their friends read. They will assist the students in finding the meaning of the text.

d. Silent Reading

According to Charles (2000:40), silent reading should be encouraged to develop automaticity, confidence and enjoyment. To check whether the learners understand what they have read, the teacher tests them by giving questions based on the text.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the ability to read the text, process it, and understand its meaning. Reading comprehension is defined, as the level of understanding of a text or meaning. According to Sinurat, Sinaga, and Sembiring (2017:25), reading comprehension is an attempt to understand, evaluate, and also recognize the author's ideas of reading text. This understanding comes from the interaction between the words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside the text or message. Westwood (2008:31) reveals that reading comprehension can be defined as an active thinking process through which a reader internationally constructs meaning to form a deeper understanding of concepts and information presented in a text.

Snow (2002:11) states that reading comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. The words extracting and constructing to emphasize both the importance and the insufficiency of the text as a determinant of reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is process to get something from that our reading in the texts, like newspaper, magazine, article, act. Reading comprehension is very important to reader successful, especially students in reading of learning.

Reading Comprehension Strategies

In improving reading skills, the students have to practice reading a lot, and use certain strategies. The students' ability to comprehend the text depends on their ability to use strategy to understand what writer writes. Nuttal(1982:114) classifies reading strategies into two types. Those are skimming, scanning, summarizing, and questioning.

a. Skimming

Skimming is useful to be applied in reading. Grellet (1999:67) stated that skimming means glance rapidly over a text get the gist of it. It means skimming is use quests to build students confidence and an understanding that it is possible to gain meaning without reading every word in a text. Skimming assist the readers to understand the main idea of the text before reading it carefully. Students can do skimming in several ways such as the reading the title or the other heading and look at the picture, reading the first and the last paragraph of the text.

b. Scanning

Scanning means glancing rapidly through a text to search for a specific piece of information (Grellet, 1981:240-241). It means scanning that is the ability to read a text quickly in order to find specific information that is needed like a date, a figure or a name and ignore over all unimportant information. For instance, a student can the list of names in a telephone directory to find a phone number. Scanning helps the reader find information quickly without reading the whole text.

c. Summarizing

Summarizing is how we take larger selections of the text and reduce them to their bare essentials: the gist, the key ideas, the main points that are worth noting and remembering. It is the distillation, condensation, or reduction of a larger work into its primary notions. We strip away the extra verbiage and extraneous examples. We focus on the heart of the matter. We try to find the key words and phrases that, when uttered later, still manage to capture the gist of what we've read. We are trying to capture the main ideas and the crucial details necessary for supporting them.

d. Questioning

Questioning is a strategy that readers use to engage with the text. Questioning techniques help the reader to clarify and comprehend what he is reading. Struggling readers tend not to ask questions of themselves or the text as they read. Teachers who model how to ask questions while reading help children to learn how to build interest with the text and become stronger readers. Questions help students clarify and deepen understanding of the text they are reading.

Methodology

Research Design

The design of this research was descriptive quantitative research study. This research design is to describe the ability of the students' reading comprehension. According to Creswell (2012: 13), quantitative research problem based on trend in the field or on the need to explain why something occurs. Quantitative research relied on data that consist of numbers, statistics, and mathematical models. Descriptive design is one the design in the research that obtains information focusing in current status and phenomena. Gay (1987: 189) states that descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. This study was done in order to get description about students' ability in comprehending descriptive text. Descriptive research involved a collection of techniques used to specify, delineate, or describe naturally occurring phenomena without experimental manipulation. They were directed to describe students' ability reading comprehension by the eighth grade students of SMP Trisakti 1 Medan.

The Source of Data

The data collection in a research is typically extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information, such as observations, interviews, documents (Creswell (2007:75). This research used a test as an instrument for collecting data which concerns reading comprehension test.

The Technique of Analyzing Data

After all the result of the instruments had revealed, the writer analyzed the data with the following steps:
1. Calculating all of the students' score
2. Calculating mean and standard deviation as follows:

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{N} \quad SD = i\sqrt{\frac{fx2}{N} - C^2}$$

Where:
M = Mean score of the students
$\sum x$ = The sum of all score
N = The number of students
3. Calculating the percentage correct answer made by the students could be calculate as follows:

$$P = \frac{R}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where,
P = Percentage
R = Correct answers
N = Total items

Findings

Data Analysis

The data of this research were obtained from the result of the students' test reading comprehension at SMP Trisakti 2 Medan. The test consists of try out test and real test.
The tests were 25 questions which consisted multiple choice items. The next day, the writer started checking and analyzing the real test. The writer gave score one by one of worksheet students. The writer gave score 4 for each of items. If the students can answer all items multiple choice form correctly the score was 100.
After scoring the test, from 50 students as a sample, it is found that the highest score is 92 with the total correct answer 23 the weight 4, achieved by 1 student, and the lowest score is 20 with the total correct answer 5, achieved by 1 students, to see the score of the students **(see appendix V).** The writer also calculated score group of the students and calculated mean score of the students' ability in SMP Trisakti 1 Medan.

Score group	Frecuency	X	fx	fx^2
82 – 92	4	3	12	36
71 – 81	5	2	10	20

60 – 70	16	1	16	16
A.M 49 – 59	**18**	0	0	0
38 – 48	4	-1	-4	4
27 – 37	2	-2	-4	8
16 – 26	1	-3	-3	9
			$\sum 26$	$\sum 87$

C = Kumulatif

$C = \frac{fx}{N}$

$C = \frac{fx}{N} = \frac{26}{50}$

C = 0.25

C_i = 0.25 x 10 = 2.5

Mean = A.M + C_i

      = 54 + 2.5

Mean = 56.50

After counting the mean result of the student's scores **(see appendix VI),** the writer counted the students' ability on reading comprehension by the correct answer into percentage by using the formula below:

$P = \frac{R}{N}$ X 100%

$P = \frac{738}{25}$ X 100%

P = 29.52 %

Based on the result of students' ability on reading comprehension, it showed that the students have 738 the total correct answers of 25 multiple choices. After the writer calculated the result of the test, the writer calculated the total of correct answer (738) then divided it by 25 items of multiple choices with the result was 29.52 %. It can be said that the students' of SMP Trisakti 1 Medan are unable yet on doing reading comprehension. It should be reaching up to 50 % for them to be categorized "able".

After analyzing the result of the test, the writer calculated percentage who many students reach the Minimal Criterion Mastery. The Minimal Criterion Mastery in SMP Trisakti 1 Medan is 77. The students were categorized "able" on reading comprehension if 70% total students got score ≥ 77. However, the writer only found 5 students who got score higher than 77.

Discussion

As the result of the research based on the totality of the students the writer found 56.50 for mean score and 12.95 for standard deviation. There were 5 students who got score above 77 who passed the Minimal Criterion Mastery from 50 students who followed the test. It means that the eighth-grade students at SMP Trisakti 1 Medan are not able yet to comprehend the reading text because only 10% (students) who passed the Minimal Criterion Mastery whereas according to rule, there must be 70% of the total students who score above 77 in order to be said "able". Therefore, it can be concluded based on Minimal Criterion Mastery that eighth grade students of SMP Trisakti 1 Medan not yet able to read comprehension.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this research is presented by the data which have been analyzed in previous chapter. From all the data analysis about the ability of the eighth-grade students on reading comprehension it can be concluded based on the total correct answer made by the students in multiple choices was 738. The table show that percentage of the ability reading comprehension 29.25%. Based on analyzing the test, the writer concluded that the students' ability categorized unable. Most students are not understood what they are read. They were confused how to comprehend the text. Based on the total number of students, it describes that the mean score range of the students' ability on reading comprehension as is 56.50. The writer found out only 5 students who got score higher 77 and passed Minimal Criterion Mastery. It means that the eighth-grade students at SMP Trisakti 1 Medan are not yet able to comprehend reading text based on their Minimal Criterion Mastery because 45 of the students cannot do the test well. The regulation of saying ability is fulfilled if 70% of the total number of the students can do the test well.

References

Brown. D. 2001. Learning How to Learn from Reading. *Reader Meets Author: Bridging the Gap.* New York: Routledge.

Carroll, J. B. 1993. *Human Cognitive Abilities*. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Charles, J. A. 2000. *Assessing Reading*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Creswell, J. W. 2012. *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and* Carroll, J. B. 1993. *Human Cognitive Abilities.* UK: Cambridge University Press.

Gay, L. R. 1987. *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application*. New York: Merrill Publishing Company.

Grellet, F. 1981. Developing Reading Skills: *A Practical Guide to Reading Comprehension Exercises*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Grellet, F. 1999. *A practical Guide to Reading Comprehension Exercises.* London: Cambridge.

Klingner, et al. 2007. *Teaching Reading in the 21st Century: A Glimpse at How Special Education Teachers Promote Reading Comprehension.* Learning Disability Quarterly. New Work: Publishing Company.

Mikulecky, B. S. 2008. *Teaching Reading in A Second Language*. New York: Routledge.

Nuttal, C. 1982. *Teaching Reading Skills in A Foreign Language*. London: Heinemann Education books.

Patel, M. F. and Jain, P. M. 2008. *English Language Teaching.* Bangalore: Sunrise Publishers and Distributors.

Pandiangan, S.R., Sari, A.S.P., and Ginting, F.Y.A. 2020. Applying Murder Technique to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension of the Seventh-Grade students of SMP Santo Thomas 1 in the Academic Year of 2020/2021. *KAIROS English Language Teaching Journal (KAIROS ELT-journal), 4*(3), 63-64.

Robbins, S. P. 2007. *Perilaku Organisasi (Organizational Behavior)*. Jakarta: SalembaEmpat.

Sinurat, T. M, Sari, A.S.P., and Sembiring, N. 2017. Imroving students' Reading Comprehension of the Twelfth Grade Students of SMA Negeri 1 Batang Kuis through Group Investation Method. *KAIROS English Language Teaching Journal (KAIROS ELT-Journal), 3*(2), 25-26.

Snow, C. 2002. *Reading for Understanding: Toward an R&D Program in Reading Comprehension*. London: Heinemann Education Books.

Wilson, K. 2006. *Second Language Classroom Reading: A Social Constructivist Approach*. *The Reading Matrix*. New York: Longman.