Conference Paper

Reading Comprehension Problems on English Texts Faced By High School Students in Medan

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Abstract

In the English teaching and learning process, there are four skills that are identified as very important; listening, speaking, reading and writing. The Indonesian government places English as a compulsory subject for junior and senior high school. But in practice, teaching English is not too maximal. Reading skills in this case reading English texts is very important because by reading it is open the opportunity to absorb other existing knowledge. Reading comprehension is an advanced level of reading skills. Senior high school students are expected to have mastered the comprehension skills of reading English texts at an advanced level. This is because most likely at the level of lectures these students are required to read English reference books. Therefore, research that reveals the problems that exist in the teaching and learning process of Reading Comprehension English texts needs to be done. Data sources were the articles about teaching English, focusing in the problem of reading comprehension. Data were words and sentences from the articles. The analysis technique used was thematic analysis. Based on the research, problem face by student in reading comprehension of English text was majoring in three theme; 1. Problems from the student self, 2. Problems from the teacher, and 3.External problems. Problems from the student self consist of three part; student basic English ability, less attraction on the subject and not motivated. Problems from the teacher were not using any method while teaching and used inappropriate method. External problems were material and environment.

Keywords: Reading Comprehension, Thematic Analysis, English Teaching and Learning

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1. Introduction

In the English teaching and learning process, there are four skills that are identified as very important; listening, speaking, reading and writing (Brown, 2001). The Indonesian government places English as a compulsory subject for junior and senior high school. This indicates that English is important to learn.

The ability to read opens new knowledge and opportunities, especially the ability to read texts in foreign languages (English). This allows students to get information,

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pleasure and do many other things that are done by the world community due to information obtained from reading. Better reading skills also enable people to be successful in academics (Iftanti, 2015). A current study showed that the better the reading skills students have, the better students in achieving knowledge (Akbaşlı, Şahin, &Yaykiran, 2016).

But in fact, the English language skills of students and society in Indonesia are still less than those of neighboring countries; Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei Darrusalam. This is in line with the ability to read and understand English-language texts by students. As a student the ability to read and understand text is very important to get the information contained in the text. Therefore, improving the quality of students' reading comprehension is needed to help not only in terms of English language learning, but also to improve the quality of students' overall knowledge.

High school students are the last stage of a student before entering the College and University live. At this stage the level of understanding English is around Intermediate to Advanced level. This can be seen from the curriculum and expected outcomes in learning English. High school students have learned about various types of texts in English. This can be seen from the exam questions they will face, namely the National Examination and the College Entrance Examination. Therefore, reading comprehension skills are very important and useful for high school students.

Reading comprehension itself is an advanced level of reading and / or reading skills. At least there are two levels of reading; the initial level and level of reading comprehension. The initial level is teaching reading where the teacher introduces to students orthographic writing in separate alphabetical order. At this point, the teacher generally teaches students some basic English vocabulary to contextualize phonemic knowledge of letters. Meanwhile, reading comprehension is a higher reading skill level. Students must be able to use their cognitive skills to understand the interrelated conditions between written and oral communication where basically these types of communication differ from each other (Oakhill, Cain, &Elbro, 2015).

Therefore research that aims to identify the problems that exist in the learning process of reading comprehension English texts by high school students needs to be done, weighing their importance at this time where Indonesia is among the lowest ranked countries in literacy.

2. Literature Review

English is considered the first foreign language to be studied in Indonesia. Studied as a compulsory school subject in junior high school. Middle and high school students are considered as teenagers or young adults whose ages range from thirteen to eighteen years. These kinds of students are in the age of puberty, as Brown (2001: 92) stated that students at that age are in a period of transition, confusion, self-awareness, growth and changes in body and mind. In other words, adolescent students are in a transition age between children becoming adults. They experience a growth process that makes some changes to their body and mind, and sometimes the transition process makes them confused. That can be a number of factors that need to be considered in teaching English for teenagers.

Reading is often associated with the process of interaction between readers and texts that are usually quiet, internal and personal (Alderson, 2000: 3). This means that there are many things that happen when reading. The understanding of how people interpret written texts to gain knowledge or understand messages. These processes involve three components, namely the writer, the text and the reader.

Nuttall (2000: 4) also defines reading as a process. He connects reading with the communication process and states that reading means releasing messages from the text as much as possible. In other words, the writers as the code maker have something to share with others during the process. To make it happen, the authors puts their ideas into words as text. While the reader plays the role of a decoder, which can crack the code or construct the meaning of the text, before the message enters the reader's mind and finally communication is reached.

Reading in the teaching and learning process is categorized as receptive skills defined by Harmer (2001: 199) as a way of extracting meaning from discourse. Here, students do not need to produce any language while reading, they play the role of recipients, people who receive text messages and understand them. According to Nuttall (2000: 30), in reading lessons, languages are used to obtain messages from text. This means that in reading lessons, the focus on using language is not only on vocabulary or the structure and meaning of the text. In reading lessons, the meaning is central and each language item learned has incidental benefits, therefore students must have a good strategy for understanding the text because there are various types of written texts and each text has its own characteristics.

Reading comprehension has been defined in many ways over the years. Nuttal (2000: 4) suggested that the main purpose of reading is to get the correct message from a text;

message that the author wants the reader to receive. The idea of reading has changed and shifted from what is considered a receptive process, as Harmer (2001: 199) said that reading is the way people extract meaning from text, to what is now said to be an interactive process like Nuttall (2000: 11) which stated that readers and writers depend on each other. This interaction can be complicated because of the fact that the author is not present when the reader reads and this condition can cause misunderstanding by the reader unless the reader can understand the text well.

According to Klingner, Vaughn and Broadman (2007: 8), Reading Comprehension is the process of interaction between readers and what they bring to the text, such as their prior knowledge or background and use of strategies. This process also includes variables related to the text, such as readers' interest in the text and their understanding of the text genre. This means that what the reader learns and how they respond and understand the text is individualistic. The process of building meaning depends on individual competencies, such as experience and how to interpret the text.

As stated earlier that Reading Comprehension is considered a complex process, Irwin (1991) quoted in Klingner, Vaughn and Broadman (2007: 9-11) proposes five basic understanding processes. These processes work together simultaneously and complement each other. First, micro processes occur in individual sentences. This is the ability to remember detailed ideas from a text that carries meaning. The second is an integrative process. This is the process of understanding and concluding relationships between clauses to make connections between sentences. Furthermore, a macro process is the ability to organize ideas in a coherent way. These processes can be done by choosing the most important information to remember and removing relatively less important details. There is also an elaborative process. These processes connect information provided in the text with prior knowledge or background. The final process is the metacognitive process. This is awareness or control of cognitive processes. In this process the reader tries to understand the text, chooses what information needs to be remembered and decides which strategies to use when reading. The metacognitive strategies used by the reader include repeating information to improve memory, underline the words or important parts of a section, record and check understanding.

In short, Reading Comprehension starts from words, then phrases, clauses, sentences to text. Understanding depends on the ability of the reader to draw meaning from printed words to interpret information correctly. This understanding can include text variables, such as vocabulary, syntax, and grammar and reader variables, such as background knowledge, cognitive development, use of strategies, interests and goals.

3. Research Method

This study took data in several articles about English teaching in Medan using purposive sampling technique. According to Sugiyono (2016: 85) purposive sampling is a technique of sampling data sources with certain considerations, the initial consideration in determining the sample. The data sources were obtained through internet by browsing the key words (library research).

This study used observation and documentation techniques to obtain research data. Observation technique was applied by observing the articles, the articles were in the form of a document collected and listed by researcher. The data were words and sentences from the articles.

At the stage of data analysis was using thematic analysis methods. This analysis was used to find out what problems exist in the teaching and learning process of understanding reading English texts by high school students in the city of Medan.

Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. Braun & Clarke (2006) suggested that it is the first qualitative method that should be learned as it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis. There are many different ways to approach thematic analysis (e.g. Alhojailan, 2012; Boyatzis,1998; Javadi&Zarea, 2016). In this example, this study follow Braun & Clarke's (2006) 6-step framework. This is arguably the most influential approach, in the social sciences at least, probably because it offers such a clear and usable framework for doing thematic analysis.

The goal of a thematic analysis is to identify themes, i.e. patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use these themes to address the research or say something about an issue. Braun & Clarke (2006) distinguish between two levels of themes: semantic and latent. Semantic themes was within the explicit or surface meanings of the data and the analyst is not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written. In contrast, the latent level looks beyond what has been said and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies - that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data. The data obtained was analyzed using thematic analysis. Braun & Clarke (2006) provide a six-phase guide framework for conducting this analysis.

TABLE 1: Braun & Clarke's six-phase framework for doing a thematic analysis.

1.	Step 1: Become familiar with the data,	4.	Step 4: Review themes,
2.	Step 2: Generate initial codes,	5.	Step 5: Define themes,
3.	Step 3: Search for themes	6.	Step 6: Write-up

The first step in any qualitative analysis is reading, and re-reading the transcripts. In this stages the research data is comprehend thoroughly. The second phase, reseacher started to organize the data in a meaningful and systematic way. Coding reduces lots of data into small chunks of meaning. There are different ways to code and the method will be determined by perspective and research questions. In this stage, the data is grouped considered on similarity. The focus of each group is given code. The data can be based from the origin or sources, the similar semantic aspect and etc.

As defined earlier, a theme is a pattern that captures something significant or interesting about the data and/or research question. As Braun & Clarke (2006) explain, there are no hard and fast rules about what makes a theme. A theme is characterized by its significance. In this case researchers examined the codes and some of them clearly fitted together into a theme. For example, several codes were related to the problems that come from the student inner self. Then, the theme created for it is named "Problems from the Student". The fourth phase researcher review, modify and develop the preliminary themes that already identified in Step 3. Do they make sense? At this point it is useful to gather together all the data that is relevant to each theme. The data associated with each theme and considered whether the data really did support it. The next step is to think about whether the themes work in the context of the entire data set. In this example, the data set is one extract but usually will have more than this and will have to consider how the themes work both within a single interview and across all the interviews. Themes should be coherent and they should be distinct from each other. Things to think about include:

- Do the themes make sense?

- Does the data support the themes?

- If themes overlap, are they really separate themes?

- Are there themes within themes (subthemes)?

- Are there other themes within the data?

For example the theme; Problems from the Student, does this theme according to our research question? Will this theme answer the problem stated in the background of study? Those kinds of questions used to review the validity of themes make by the researchers. After the review stage, there will be some changes on the corpus data of the research. There will be some theme deleted or some subthemes added to a theme and etc.

This is the final refinement of the themes and the aim is to identify the 'essence' of what each theme is about (Braun & Clarke, 2006). What is the theme saying? If there

are subthemes, how do they interact and relate to the main theme? How do the themes relate to each other? In this analysis, reading comprehension problems on English texts by high school students in Medan is rooted in the other themes and display as a map theme. Usually the end-point of research is some kind of report, often a journal article or dissertation. This step is the final result of thematic analysis and the product is a journal article.

4. Result and Discussion

Based on the data analysis, which were articles of journal on reading comprehension theme from 2010 -2018, it was found some theme which represent the problems face in reading comprehension learning. These themes presented by this figured below:
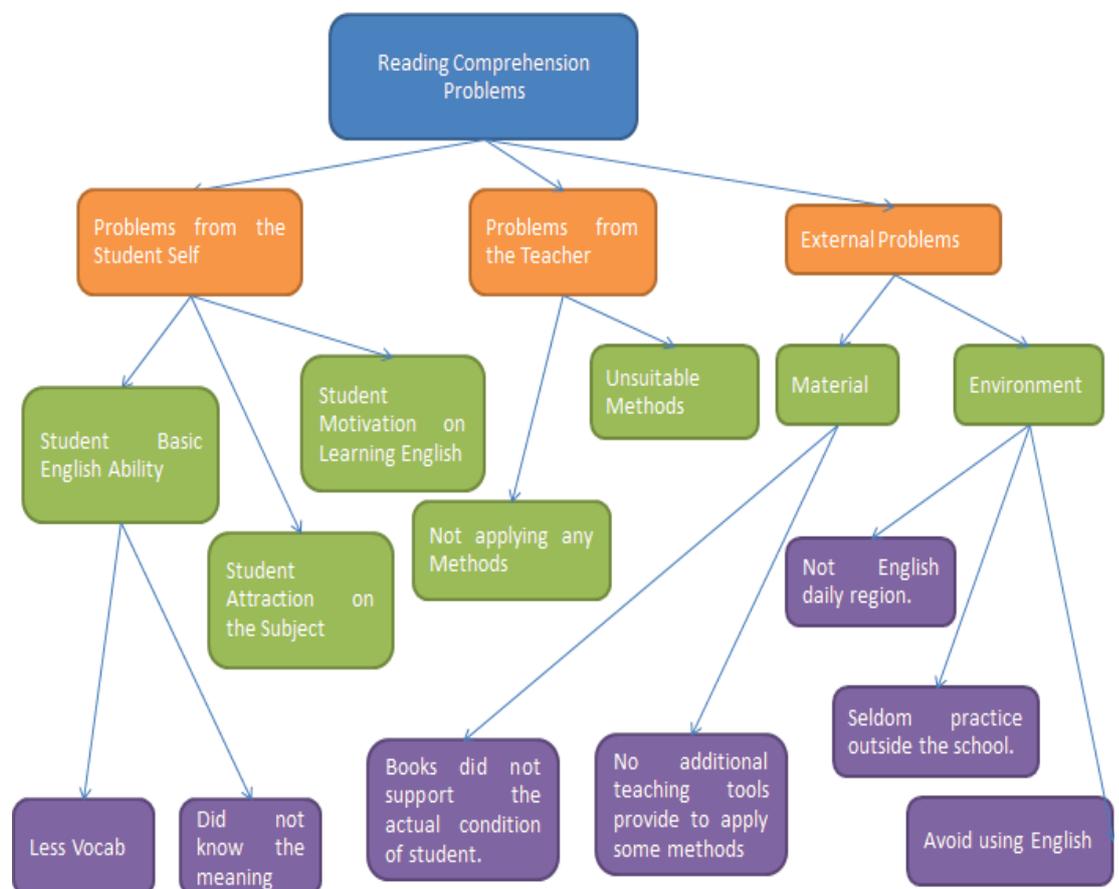
Figure 1: Site map of Reading Comprehension Problems face on Senior High English Study.

The problems appeared in reading comprehension on English Text divided into three major problems, which were; 1. Problems from the student itself, 2. Problems from the teacher, and 3.External Problems.

4.1. Problems from the student self

Based on the data, some problems came from the student self, which were by the student ability of English language. Most of the student were incapable of understanding the meaning (Indonesia meaning) of the text they read and they did not familiar with the vocabulary in the text. It portray from the wrong misspelled of the words. This was in accordance with Ulfa (2012) which stated that most of student score in English was below the minimal competences criterion. That was mean that student basics English knowledge was below average and it was affected their ability in reading comprehension. The same statement also provide in Hasibuan (2018) research result, it stated that students still have problems to get the information from the text and there were some reason why students unable in reading task because some reasons as lack of vocabulary, lack of catch the main idea, difficult to pronounce, and uninterested to read and they were still difficult to get reading comprehension before.

The other parts were student attraction toward the subject and their motivation in learning English in general. Both aspects were lack from the student, most of the student did find reading comprehension was attractive subject. They tend to think that this subject is boring and the also lack of motivation in learning English. This was potrayed by very few students studying English outside the school, such as taking English course. This was in accordance with Ulfa (2012) who stated that there were students who do not have good motivation to read and they felt the text is not interesting for them because they must keep on looking up the words in a dictionary to find out the meaning of the words. These activities make them feel bored and uninterested in reading comprehension. So, it was a problem for the teacher in teaching reading comprehension in the class.

4.2. Problems from the teacher

Based on the data, the other theme of reading comprehension problem was problem from the teacher. These problems arouse due to mainly the teacher way of teaching. From the articles that discussed reading comprehension, some researcher found that teacher did not apply any method to comprehend the reading text. Teacher just read, led the student read and told them to finish some questions in the text book. This was in accordance with Soemantri (2011) which stated that traditional teaching still applied in many classroom teaching. Seomantri (2011) also stated that lecture technique was uninteresting while others state that it was monotonous. However, teaching learning

process was dominated by the teacher as indicated by 70% of students convince the researcher that lecture was still dominated by the lecturer (teacher center).

The other phenomenon stated in some articles that the method applied by the teacher was not suitable for the text. Some reading texts are based on genre structure, different genre need different way of interpreting and comprehending. Because of that many methods were invented to comprehend different types of reading text genre. This was in accordance with Hasibuan (2018) statement which stated that most of teachers just explained and read the text. They couldn't give more understanding about the text. They must have skills and competence to apply the appropriate teaching strategies, methods, approaches, techniques which can motivate the students to enjoy the printing materials that they distribute.

4.3. External problems

The last major theme for reading comprehension problems face by student in English text was came from external problems. External problems mean that these problems did not originate from the teacher nor the student, but from different aspect of them both. The first sub-theme of external problem was come from the material for teaching. Material in here was text book for teaching and learning and also others supplementary tools for teaching, it can be audio-visual electronic such as speaker and infocus or others. Text book was played an important rule in teaching, but from some articles regarding on reading comprehension theme, factor that made teaching reading difficult in Indonesia, one of it was the text book. Some researchers said that the text book used was inappropriate for the student level, others claimed it was inappropriate for the student objectives and other else said it did not meet the curriculum build.

The second sub-theme was the environment. In Indonesia, English still acted as foreign language and it make difficult for student to improve their basics English knowledge. Student of Indonesia seldom hear people speak with English, they seldom used it in conversation, reading books in English and all of that, Indonesia student did not familiar with English. This attitude make English become hard to learn and they think it was less useful hence their motivation to improve id less. This was in accordance with Suwandyet. Al. (2018) which stated that students really seldom participate in a classroom interaction due to their lack of conversation as the signals of their interactions with each other and the teacher. Firstly, they did not know how to respond in English. Secondly, the students were not confident to say in English. Then, students often used Indonesian language to respond. The interaction also showed that only one source of

teaching occurred that was the teacher herself. The teacher dominated the classroom interaction with few responds from the students. It means that there is no response from students and also the feedback.

5. Conclusion

Based on the research, problem face by student in reading comprehension of English text was majoring in three theme; 1. Problems from the student self, 2.Problems from the teacher, and 3.External problems. Problems from the student self consist of three part; student basic English ability, less attraction on the subject and not motivated. Problems from the teacher were not using any method while teaching and used inappropriate method. External problems were material and environment.

This study/research is expected to identify the problems face in conducting reading comprehension topic on learning English in Senior High School. The expected results can be database to overcome some regulation on improving English learning in Indonesia especially in Medan City. Furthermore, the product of this research/study is expected to be a part of journal article and books for Reading subject in University.

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