

IDENTIFYING STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN READING COMPREHENSION AT SMA MUHAMMADIYAH 1 PALU THROUGH NARRATIVE TEXT

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ABSTRAK

Untuk mengetahui kesulitan siswa dalam memahami teks naratif siswa pada kelas 10 SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Palu. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif. Subjek penelitian ini adalah seluruh siswa kelas 10 di SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Palu dan guru Bahasa Inggris kelas 10 di SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Palu. Teknik yang digunakan untuk mendapatkan data adalah kuesioner dan Pertanyaan Wawancara. Sebagai hasil akhir yang ditemukan dari angket siswa tentang masalah membaca mereka, berdasarkan hasil identifikasi ditemukan bahwa siswa SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Palu mengalami kesulitan dalam kosakata dan struktur dari teks naratif, strategi membaca yang tidak tepat, kurangnya motivasi, kurangnya latar belakang pengetahuan siswa dalam membaca narasi dan proses membaca yang buruk dimana masalah yang paling umum dialami siswa selama proses membaca adalah menjaga konsentrasi mereka. Data tersebut juga didukung dengan wawancara dengan guru. Berdasarkan hasil wawancara dengan guru, siswa memiliki masalah dalam pemahaman bacaan. Masalah siswa dalam membaca pemahaman adalah: kurangnya kosa kata, kecepatan membaca yang lambat, kurangnya motivasi, dan kebosanan. Dalam hal membaca teks naratif, siswa menunjukkan masalah berikut bahwa mereka memiliki pemahaman yang kurang dalam tata bahasa, kurangnya kompetensi untuk menemukan informasi utama dan informasi spesifik dalam bacaan, kurangnya kemampuan prediksi atau kemampuan menebak makna serta kurangnya pengetahuan latar belakang tentang bacaan, khususnya tentang latar belakang cerita atau karakter yang tidak dikenal dalam cerita.

Kata kunci: mengidentifikasi, kesulitan, membaca and naratif

ABSTRACT

To find out the students' difficulties in comprehending Narrative text at the tenth grade of SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Palu.. This research applied a qualitative research design. The subject of this research were All the students of tenth grade at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Palu and English teacher of tenth grade at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Palu. The techniques used to get the data were questionnaire and an Interview Question. As the final result found from the students' questionnaire of their reading problem, based on the result of the identification, it was found that students of SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Palu had difficulties in vocabulary and organization of narrative text, inappropriate reading strategies, lack of motivation, students' insufficient background knowledge in reading narrative and bad reading process which the most common problem experienced by the students during the reading process was keeping their concentration. The data also supported by the interview with the teacher. Based on the results of the interview with the teacher, the students have problems in reading comprehension. The students' problems in reading comprehension are: lack of vocabulary, slow reading speed, lack of motivation, and boredom. In case of reading narrative text, the students showed the following problems that they have less comprehension in grammar, lack of competence to find out the main information and specific information in the reading passage, lack of prediction ability or guessing meaning

ability as well as lack of background knowledge about the reading passage, specifically on the background story or unfamiliar characters in the story.

Keyword: identifying, difficulties, reading and narrative

INTRODUCTION

Reading is very crucial one that must be learned by the students. Because by reading students can know anything such as information about science, society, health, technology and so on. Reading is a means of the language acquisition of communication and information sharing of ideas. Like all languages, it is a complex interaction between the text and the reader.

Based on Kalayo Hasibuan (2007:115) Reading is more than merely referring to the activity of pronouncing the printed material or following each line of written page. It involves various and mixed activities. It can be said that reading is learning way for students to enrich their ability and knowledge because reading is process of deriving meaning. From the opinion, it can be indicated that reading is a process interaction between the reader and the writer to transmit what the writer wants to say in the text. In reading, the reader should understand the text to get the point from the text. In other words, reading is a process that makes the students or the readers easy to get the writer's idea.

Reading is a complex skill because it needs the comprehension of the readers to understand what the writers say. So, reading cannot be separated from comprehension. Comprehension is a process of thinking, past experience, and knowledge. Comprehension is the interaction among word identification, prior knowledge, comprehension strategies, and engagement, (Prado & Plourde, 2005).

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that reading comprehension is the process of making meaning from text. The goal, therefore, is to gain an overall understanding of what is described in the text rather than to obtain meaning from isolated words or sentences.

SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Palu has used 2013 curriculum as a guide in teaching and learning process. Based on Ministry of Education and Culture about 2013 curriculum (K13), the students are able to apply social functions, structure text, and linguistic elements of oral or written transactional interaction text. In narrative text the students should comprehend the purpose, generic structure, language feature, main idea, and

determine moral value of narrative text. So the target in reading skill in this school is the students must be able to comprehend of narrative text. The students' difficulties were reflected from their achievement in reading test. Their score of reading ability did not achieve the passing grade. The passing grade was 78. In which students are able to identify generic structure and language feature of narrative texts sufficiently.

During the preliminary research students achievement in narrative text was under the passing grade. Based on description above, the researcher found some phenomena faced by some students, which is some of the students get difficulties to identify structure of Narrative text and did not understand what they read.

Based on the phenomena depicted above, the researcher was interested in conducting research entitled "Identifying Students' Difficulties in Reading Comprehension at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Palu Through Narrative Text"

METHOD

In this research, the researchers applied qualitative research. Qualitative research is one of the research methodology which produce descriptive data in the form of speech or writing, and the behaviour of those who observed. Qualitative research is a holistic approach that involves discovery. Qualitative research is also described as an unfolding model that occurs in a natural setting that enables the researcher to develop alevel of detail from high involvement in the actual experiences.

The data of the research is taken by using questionnaire for the students and interview to the teacher for supporting the data. Respondents in this research were 21 students at the tenth grader. The researchers used *Total sampling* technique because this sampling technique requires using all of the population as the sample and the informants selected was the teacher that was interviewed in order to support the data from the respondents' answer.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

In order to get the students' data, researchers used questionnaires which were distributed to the students. The statements in the questionnaire represented the students' experience and attitude toward comprehending in Narrative text. The questionnaire

consisted of nine closed-ended statements. In case of getting students' responses, each statement had given four degree of agreement to be chosen by the students. Those were Strongly agree (Sangat setuju), Agree (Setuju), Disagree (tidak setuju) Strongly disagree (Sangat tidak setuju). The result of the data then processed to be presented as percentage form.

This part shows the students' data on the students' problem based on vocabulary and organization of narrative text. From the gathered data, researcher gained the students' difficulties in reading narrative due to Vocabulary and organization of narrative text. The following diagram presented the result of the gathered data.

Diagram 4.1

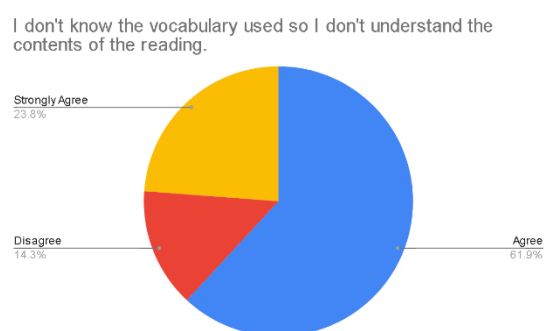
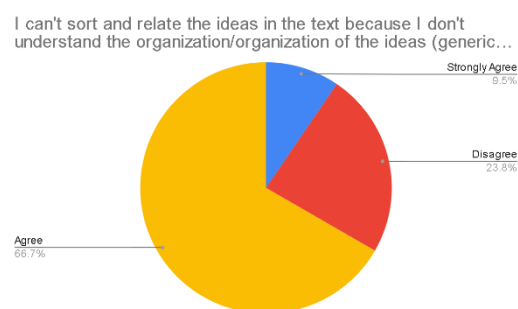


Diagram 4.2



The first diagram is showing the students' responses on the question number 1 that are calling the students' agreement or disagreement that number of vocabulary matters on reading narrative text. Based on the result of the questionnaire 23.8% respondents chose strongly agree 61.9% respondents chose agree, 14.3% respondents chose disagree and none chose strongly disagree. Due to the fact that most of the respondents show agreement on this question, it means that vocabulary matters on students' reading skill in narrative text.

The second diagram is showing the students' responses on the question number 2 about students' comprehension on the text type which is narrative text. Based on the result of the questionnaire 9.5% respondents chose strongly agree 66.7% respondents chose agree, 23.8% respondents chose disagree and none chose strongly disagree. The respondents show mostly agreement on this question, it means that students' comprehension on the text type is one of problem faced by the students.

This part shows the students' data on the students' problem based on reading strategies. The researcher gained the students' claims of their difficulties in reading narrative due to reading strategies. The following diagram presented the result of the gathered data.

Diagram 4.3

I had to read every word, because I was afraid of missing an important point that would affect the comprehension of the text...

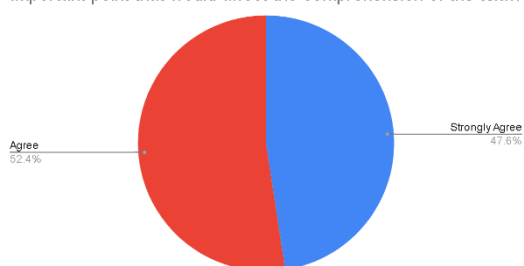
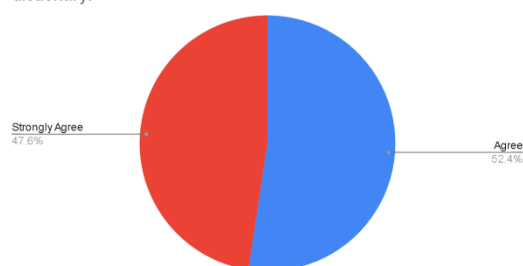


Diagram 4.4

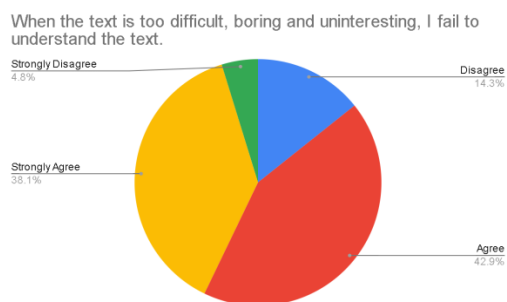
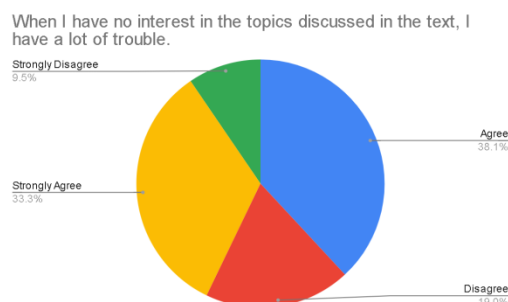
I always look up the meaning of words I don't know in the dictionary.



The third statement dealt with the students' reading strategies in reading narrative text. Diagram 4.3 shows that none of the respondent chose strongly disagree and disagree. All of the respondents shows agreement in this statement. Where 52.4% respondents chose agree and 47.6% chose strongly agree. It shows that all of the students use the same strategies in reading narrative text that they read the word one by one in case of missing the detail.

The fourth statement presents the other reading strategy used by the students. The data showed the same as the previous diagram that none of the respondent chose strongly disagree and disagree. All of the respondents shows agreement in this statement. Where 52.4% respondents chose agree and 47.6% chose strongly agree. From the data above, it could be seen that using dictionary to find the meaning of the word did help them in reading narrative text.

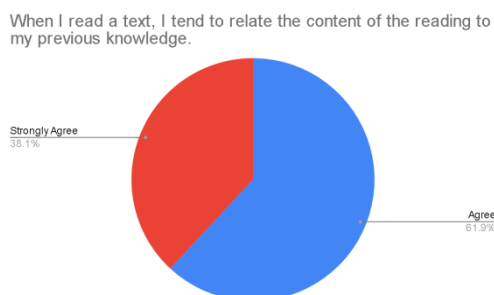
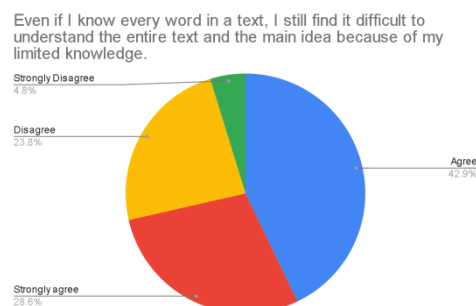
The third subpart discusses the students' motivation in reading narrative text. The researcher wanted to know how motivation could cause the difficulty toward the students. There are two statements on this subpart the result presented on the next diagrams.

Diagram 4.5**Diagram 4.6**

The fifth statement was about the interest compatibility with the students' way of learning. The questionnaire result shows that 4.8% of the respondents chose strongly disagrees, 14.3% chose disagree, 42.9% chose agree and 38.1% chose strongly agree. From these result, the researcher found that almost of the students were having problem in motivation of reading.

Statement number six dealt with the impact of lack interest in reading cause difficulties. From the questionnaire result, 9.5% chose strongly disagree, 19% chose disagree. 38.1% of the respondent chose agree and the rest of respondent (33.3%) chose strongly agree. By the most agree answer of the statement (71%), it could be concluded that the respondents felt the difficulty caused by their motivation to read.

The next part to discuss in this part was about the difficulty caused by background knowledge. The researcher wanted to know whether students' background knowledge have a big role in students' reading skill. The first to discuss is the connection between students' background knowledge and the text and the next diagram is about the students limit on their background knowledge . In the following diagram, there were the data from the respondents in responding the questionnaire.

Diagram 4.7**Diagram 4.8**

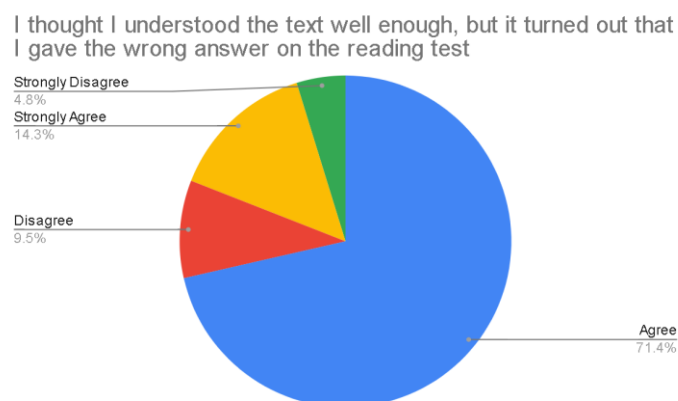
Statement number seven reveals the relation of students' background knowledge in helping the respondent to be able understand the text. There were none of the

respondents chose strongly disagree and disagree. About 61.9% chose agree followed by 38.1% chose strongly agree. The result that researcher gained from the data were all of the students use their background knowledge to understand the text.

Statement eight was getting information about the impact of students' background knowledge in reading. Based on the data, there were 23.8% respondents chose disagree, 4.8% of the respondent chose strongly disagrees. On the other hand, 42.9% respondents chose agree and 26.6% respondents chose strongly agree. The result indicates that most of the respondent support the statement.

The last subpart discussed the students' reading process. The researcher wanted to know how the students do their reading task. The statement on this subpart was only one, the result presented on next diagrams.

Diagram 4. 9



The last statement dealt with the students' reading proces. From the gathered data, 4.8% chose strongly disagree and 9.5% chose disagree. The other way 71.4% of the respondent chose agree which followed by 14.3% respondents who chose strongly agree. In conclusion, they have bad reading process.

In this part, the researcher discusses about the results of the interview with the teacher. The teacher whom interviewed in this study was the tenth grade English teacher of SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Palu, Ma'am Lies. The interview with the English teacher was done in Bahasa Indonesia and the results have been interpreted into English. Additionally, the results of the interview function as supporting explanations to the results of the questionnaire. The items of the interview with the teacher consist of seven items. They include: the teacher's opinion about the students' reading comprehension, the teacher's way of training the students' reading comprehension, difficulties faced by

the students in reading comprehension, the most-used strategy by the teacher in class, the effectiveness of the strategy used by the teacher, and how the teacher reacts to the students' lack of comprehension in reading.

In line with the first item of the interview, the teacher explained that the students' reading comprehension is low. The teacher added that this low comprehension in reading is shown by the students' achievement in reading comprehension exercise which is dominated by scores below the passing grade (≥ 70). Regarding the teacher's way of training the students' reading comprehension (the second item of the interview), the teacher, Ma'am Lies, explained that for a specific reading course, the teacher does not use a specific strategy because the Curriculum of 2013 covers all skills in an integrated way, and that the main focus of this curriculum is for the students to be able to communicate in verbal and non-verbal contexts or in spoken and written forms. Moreover, below are what the teacher, Ma'am Lies, explained. Notice that the explanations by Ma'am Lies have been interpreted into English (The original results can be seen in the appendix).

The teacher's opinion about the students' reading comprehension:

"Hmm.... the students' ability to comprehend a reading passage? (Smiled) ... well, it is so-so. It can be concluded that their ability to read and comprehend what they read is low. It is because the result of their test which required them to read was below the passing grade."

The teacher's way of training the students' reading comprehension:

"(I don't use a particular strategy) for a specific training because.... in Curriculum of 2013, all English skills are covered together.... and the main focus is that the students have to be able to communicate in spoken and written forms.... So, yes, it is not quite often."

Relying on the third item of the interview, the teacher explained that the students face numerous difficulties. They include lack of vocabulary, slow reading speed, less motivation, and boredom. Lack of vocabulary makes the students check the dictionary to find the meaning of new words. It is explained by the teacher that this is so inefficient considering limited amount of time they have during the class. Less motivation and boredom issues are related to the students' lack of vocabulary as implied by the teacher. Then, for comprehending the narrative text, the teacher explained that the students face difficulties that deal with less comprehension in grammar, lack of competence to find

out the main information and specific information in the reading text, lack of ability to predict the meaning of words in the reading text, and lack of background knowledge about the reading text, especially on the background story or unfamiliar characters in the story.

In line with the students' less comprehension in grammar, the teacher explained that narrative text comes with past tense words. This is difficult for the students as they have to find out the present tense of the words before they check out their meanings in the dictionary. It is even more difficult if the words are in the form of irregular verbs that the past form words are different from its present forms. This difficulty that the students face results in the difficulty to find out and understand the main and supporting information of the text. Further, here are the teacher's responses about difficulties faced by the students in reading comprehension:

“(Smiled) uhm... many problems that the students face... Less vocabulary in their mind, their reading speed is low.. Usually, they have to repeat or read a text many times so that they understand its content. Uhhh.... they only read and understand the text word by word while checking out the dictionary. So, they find difficulty which caused their less motivation to learn English and it is only for reading... other skills are not involved yet. Besides, they feel bored just by checking out dictionary more often because it is only time consuming, but also quite stressful for students.... Other than that, the atmosphere... in learning English... is like... gloomy... that makes them unmotivated. It is so time consuming, so not efficient... not only for the students, but also for the teacher. (laughed).”

Moreover, the teacher also explained about the students' difficulties in reading narrative text. Here is the teacher's interpreted explanation:

“That (narrative text)... is more difficult for the students to understand. It is because it is consisted of past tense (words and sentences). So that the students need double efforts to understand the narrative text because they need to find the present form of the words.... it is even harder for the irregular verbs.... it makes the students have got more things to do (laughed)... Also, the students find difficulties to understand and find out the main and specific information in the reading text... similar to the previous difficulty.... It results in the students' effort to check out every word in the dictionary... it is so inefficient actually... and using the unfamiliar background story and characters doubled the students' difficulties even more.”

In line with the fourth and the fifth items of the interview about the most-used strategy by the teacher in class and the effectiveness of the strategy used by the teacher, Ma'am Lies explained that she used snowball throwing strategy, especially when the students seem to get demotivated. Then, to raise the students' activeness in the class, she used small group discussion. It is expected by the teacher that by using small group discussion technique, the students can be more independent while learning English and raise their awareness of the topic as well as improving their thinking ability. For the effectiveness of the strategy used, the teacher explained that it depends on how the teacher applies the strategy. It (snowball throwing) is proven to be effective, but only to improve the students' activeness and motivation in class. Here are the teacher's responses on both items.

"In class, I use a few strategies... it depends on the situation (and condition of the students). If the class gets bored.., I use snowball throwing (strategy), especially when the students start to get sleepy. I also use small group discussion.. for.... the students to be more active. So that, the teacher will talk less... this strategy is also good to make the students learn independently... and.... their thinking ability gets sharpened..... and for them to be able to get and find information they need at their will from various sources. The strategy can help them to learn from other students by sharing opinions."

"(Smiled) uhm..... the effectiveness depends on how the teacher applies the strategy (I think). However,.. it is effective so far.... not to improve the students' scores or anything...., but to improve their motivation and participation as well as their activeness..... again, it relies on how we teach them in class. (It is important to) remember that we give them our best performance.., so that the students will be motivated more. That's it."

Finally, on the last item about how the teacher reacts to the students' lack of comprehension in reading, Ma'am Lies explained that it is genuinely quite stressful. However, she reminded us that it is important to know the students and to know their preferences. Not every student is interested in learning English. Then, if the students face problems in reading, we have to bear in mind that it is a task for the teacher to help the students overcome those problems and not to force the students to be perfectly proficient in reading comprehension. In addition, here is Ma'am Lies' response:

"Wow.... (laughed)... for that one.... it is quite stressful. (smiled).... one thing for sure is that.... not every student has the same interest in English"

learning. Some of them are fond of English.. and some of them are not. We cannot force them and generalize them. If the students find difficulties to comprehend what they read... then.... we have to motivate and guide them to learn together with their friends or consult with the teacher in person. If it doesn't turn out well, the teacher has to find a better solution.... but still, under a circumstance that every student possesses different skills and ability. So, don't force them!"

DISCUSSION

As the final result found from the students' questionnaire of their reading problem first is the vocabulary and organization of narrative text. Based on the result of the questionnaire, almost of the students did not know the vocabulary and organization of narrative text and it caused them difficult in understanding the text. It might happen because the students could not get the point in the passage when they found compound sentence, complex sentence or even it was compound-complex sentence. It could also happen because they do not know sentence structure. Akbari (2014) stated that knowing grammar, including sentence structure can help students to comprehend the text correctly. The students can face the problem in reading when their knowledge about sentence structure is limited. How the students could reading the texts with complex sentences if they do not understand the text even it in simple sentences. Therefore, their limited knowledge about sentence structure hinders their reading comprehension.

The second aspect of reading problem was inappropriate reading strategies. The students felt lack of reading comprehension in understanding narrative text if they used inappropriate reading strategies. Based on the result of questionnaire, the students tended to use inappropriate strategy such as always looked up the meaning of unknown words in the dictionary. It probably happened because the students may think that every single word they read should be understood so that they keep looking at their dictionary for some help in checking the meaning. Besides, the students also tended to use reading aloud strategy which was not part of the right strategy in reading comprehension. The students tended to use reading aloud strategy which was not part of the right strategy in reading comprehension. The students probably do because they assumed that reading aloud could boost their concentration and could comprehend the text quickly. While it was a mistake as when the students had to read out because half of their brain

concentrated on the pronunciation (Billah, 2015). Therefore, it is needed to give model and instruction to students in apply appropriate strategy in reading comprehension.

The third is motivation. It shows us that most of the students agreed that their lack of motivation caused them difficult in reading comprehension of narrative text. As we know, motivation is one of the most aspects that can influence reading comprehension (Alizadeh, 2016). Ahmadi (2017) added that students' motivation absolutely affects their reading. It means that students with stronger reading motivation can be expected to have better reading comprehension as they have enthusiasm to read further and longer. In addition, Pourhosein et al (2012) stated that reading motivation is the large amount of motivation that students have to concentrate their positive or negative opinions about reading. If the students have good motivation in reading, they will develop their comprehension by reading wide range of topic. It is also supported by Kinley and Ben-Hur (2015) who stated that it is the belief that if the students are rewarded certain behaviors they will get more of them (behaviors), and if they are punished certain behaviors, they will get less of them (behaviors). In other words, teachers or parents could be the agents to foster the positive behavior in reading so that students have the correct motivation to read.

The fourth aspect of reading problem was lack of background knowledge (63.3%). Based on the result of the questionnaire, the students' insufficient background knowledge in reading narrative text caused them faced difficulty in following the author's intension which made them unable to understand the purpose of the text. Students' background knowledge is important in reading because understanding the text depends on how much background knowledge they have (Al-Jahwari & Al-Humaidi, 2015). In addition, expanding students' background knowledge could serve as an improvement or it is not only for facilitating comprehension processes, but also word identification (Priebe et al:2011). In sum up, the students not only get the information from the text, but they also need to apply their prior knowledge to process a new knowledge that intended in the text.

The last aspect of reading problem was difficulty in reading process (60%). The most common problem experienced by the students during the reading process was keeping their concentration. It means that the students process the text slowly when reading because they have to repeat over and over again as their minds drift away. Processing

the text slowly was included in difficulty of reading process because it made the reading process less effective and efficient. Besides, the students should be given limited time to complete tasks that require reading comprehension. Being a fast and efficient reader is important for not only classroom based lessons, but also for satisfying homework requirements and performing well on standardized exams (Martiarini, 2013). Therefore, improving the students' ability in processing the text is important as a part of effective and efficient reading comprehension process.

Furthermore, based on the results of the interview with the teacher, the students have problems in reading comprehension. The students' problems in reading comprehension are: lack of vocabulary, slow reading speed, lack of motivation, and boredom. In case of reading narrative text, the students showed the following problems that they have less comprehension in grammar, lack of competence to find out the main information and specific information in the reading passage, lack of prediction ability or guessing meaning ability as well as lack of background knowledge about the reading passage, specifically on the background story or unfamiliar characters in the story. This is in line with the findings by Manihuruk (2020).

In addition, the students' problems obtained from the results of the interview with the teacher are related to the questionnaire results. It can also be implied from the results of the interview with the teacher that the root of the students' problems is lack of vocabulary (Susanto, 2017; Al-Khasawneh, 2019); and that using interesting games can help the students overcome this issue (Hashemi, 2021).

To solve the students' problems in comprehending narrative text for Ten grade students of SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Palu, the teachers need to try some particular methods and technique in their teaching in order to achieve the learning objectives. The English teacher tried to solve the problems in learning the reading process with aim increasing the ability of students, students pay more attention to the material, and enjoy during the learning process. All of these strategies have been analyzed as follows:

The strategy that teachers apply in the classroom is teacher center; with the white board media the teacher explains the material about the narrative text. After that the teacher gives the exercise to the students. Based on the result of interview with Mrs. Lies, the English teacher of SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Palu, she stated that she has been applying the teacher center technique it is been long time. There are many strategies applied by

the teacher, small group discussion is one of trusted technique in teaching narrative text which focuses on reading skill. The strategies are defined as a technique of teaching reading comprehension in which the students are divided into small groups. Small group discussion is one of the strategies used in learning narrative text in tenth grade SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Palu. There are many advantages of small group discussion that applied in class.

In line with the previous paragraph that deals with overcoming the students' problems in reading comprehension, the teacher explained that she uses some strategies, the snowball throwing and small group discussion. Snowball throwing is used by the teacher to improve the students' motivation in class and the small group discussion is used by the teacher to activate the students' participation. According to the teacher, small group discussion makes the students depend on themselves a lot during the class because it allows the students to think and to share information with their friends. This statement by the teacher has been proven by Mesfin & Adimasu (2020) that group discussion enhances the students' participation.

Additionally, as implied by the teacher, through small group discussion strategy, the students are not overly rely on the teacher, but they are able to develop their thinking skills, find information from various resources, and learn from other students, small group discussion can develop the ability to express ideas with words verbally and compare it with the other ideas, small group discussion can help students to respect the others, aware of their limitations, and accept all the differences, small group discussion to help every student to be more responsible in their learning the read narrative text, small group discussion strategy improve social skills as well as academic achievement, including developing self-esteem, positive interpersonal relationships with the others, developing the management time skills, and positive attitude toward school.

CONCLUSION

This research was conducted to find out the students' difficulties in reading narrative text at the tenth grade student of SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Palu. Based on the result of the identification, it was found that students of SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Palu had difficulties in vocabulary and organization of narrative, inappropriate reading strategies, lack of motivation, students' insufficient background knowledge in reading

narrative and bad reading process which the most common problem experienced by the students during the reading process is keeping their concentration. The data also supported by the interview with the teacher. Based on the results of the interview with the teacher, the students have problems in reading comprehension. The students' problems in reading comprehension are: lack of vocabulary, slow reading speed, lack of motivation, and boredom. In case of reading narrative text, the students showed the following problems that they have less comprehension in grammar, lack of competence to find out the main information and specific information in the reading passage, lack of prediction ability or guessing meaning ability as well as lack of background knowledge about the reading passage, specifically on the background story or unfamiliar characters in the story.

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