

The Analysis of Students' Learning Difficulties in Reading Comprehension: A Case Study at SMP Negeri 3 Kombi

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ABSTRACT

Reading is one of the most used activities in English Language Learning (ELL), however many students struggle with reading skill in English classroom. The present study aims at investigating the learning difficulties faced by students in reading text and the factors contributing to the learning difficulties. The study conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Kombi employs qualitative method with case study design. Eight 9th-grade students are chosen as the sample of the study using purposive sampling. Data collected from documentation and interview are analyzed through the 3 steps of qualitative data analysis namely data condensation, data display and drawing and verifying conclusion. The findings showed that 9th grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Kombi faced learning difficulties in reading recount text. The learning difficulties they faced are vocabulary (55%), making inference (45%), determining main idea and finding detailed information (35%). Factors such as limited vocabulary, fluency, familiarity with the subject matter and ineffective reading strategies contribute significantly to students reading difficulties. Other factors such as weak verbal reasoning, level of difficulty, and information retention also contribute to the reading difficulties faced by the students. This study suggests that teachers need to use various strategies to tackle the reading difficulties faced by the students.

INTRODUCTION

English language learning (ELL) is a process focused on developing proficiency in English as a second or foreign language (Hossain, 2024). ELL enables the learners to acquire English language knowledge and skills. The knowledges English consist of elements such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. The skills refer to four core language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Sarica & Cavus, 2020). Hence, the ultimate goal of ELL is to help the learners to master and use English major goal is for learners competently (Lee, 2022).

One of the English skills that is taught the most in the classroom is the reading skill since it cannot be separated from the teaching and learning process (Safitri, 2023). Reading, according to Septia et al (2022), reading refers to English skill that enable students to understand the meaning of the text they read. Reading is a receptive skill that allows people to get knowledge from what they read or from a text (Masduqi, 2016; Sadiku, 2015). Since reading is categorized as receptive skill, students don't need to produce words. This skill helps students to receive and understand what they read. Students are required to understand more than simply the text. They additionally have to understand the text's contents. They can comprehend what the text says by understanding the words in it.

Reading Comprehension is the process of extracting and constructing meaning while interacting and engaging with written language (Snow, 2002). It involves cooperation between the eyes and brain to process information efficiently and accurately. Fahriany defines comprehension as the ability to make meaning of the text. According to Fahriany (2014, p.17), text interpretation involves constructing meaning based on the reader's past knowledge (schemas). Fahriany emphasized the importance of comprehension abilities in addition to the ability to organize and interpret language. Comprehension

abilities are essential for understanding the main idea, information about people, places, even and time in the text.

Many EFL students faced difficulties in reading comprehension as shown in the previous research (Nurmalasari & Haryuddin, 2021; Torppa et al, 2020; Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). There are several factors contributing to students' learning difficulties in reading comprehension. Graham and Beller (2002) explains that students with reading comprehension issues may struggle with recognizing and applying background knowledge, poor decoding and word recognition skills, limited vocabulary, underdeveloped reading fluency, ineffective or inefficient comprehension strategies, and limited understanding of common concepts. In their research (Moghadam, Zainal, and Ghaderpour, 2012 and Alderson, 2010) explained that unfamiliar words in a text might hinder their ability to understand the text. Chen & Chen (2015) found that students' difficulties in reading comprehension are caused by not having a basic skill for effective reading.

In Indonesia context, many previous studies have shown that students faced learning difficulties in reading comprehension. At the elementary level, Fadilah, Chandra & Wijanarko (2024) and Frans, Ani & Wijaya (2023) found that students struggle to answer questions correctly and explain complex vocabulary from a reading text due to a lack of interest in reading and motivation. It resulted in the learning of reading comprehension becoming boring. At junior high school level, Nanda & Amzy (2020) and Marlinton, Syahri & Mayasari (2023) explained that learning difficulties faced by the students are caused by lack of motivation, insufficient prior knowledge, lack of vocabulary, and the learning method used in the classroom.

The learning difficulties in reading comprehension are not the problem for students in elementary and junior high school. Students in senior high school and higher education institutions also faced the same learning difficulties. Lestari, Muljanto & Hamzah (2020) and Lestari, Fitriani & Ediana (2017) argue that reading comprehension challenges for Indonesian EFL students include vocabulary, main concept, inference, reference, and detail information. As a result, the students cannot understand the text they read. At a higher education institution, study conducted by Baiti & Sofa (2023) showed that university students have difficulty grasping word meanings, long sentences, and identifying important ideas. Ramadhianti & Somba (2023) found that EFL students in Indonesia struggle with reading comprehension, particularly differentiating major concepts, interpreting vocabulary, and connecting themes to background information.

The difficulties in reading comprehension are also experienced by the students at SMP N 3 Kombi. Initial observation conducted by the researcher shows that the students at this school, especially in 9th grade have problems in reading comprehension. The students showed that they lack vocabulary as they cannot understand the meaning of reading text. The lack of vocabulary also contributed to students' inability to grasp the information within the text. Since the students experienced learning difficulties in reading comprehension activity, the learning process was not going well. The teacher needed to allocate more time to make the students understand the text in the classroom.

Based on the background of the study, the writer identifies the following problems related to students learning difficulties in reading comprehension, namely: many students have difficulties in comprehending reading texts, some students lack vocabulary and do not understand the text they read, there are factors contributes to students' learning difficulties in reading comprehension and the teaching method used by the teacher is not interesting enough for reading comprehension. Based on the problem mentioned before the present study focuses on the learning difficulties in reading comprehension and the factors contributing to those difficulties. It is important because reading is the most used activity in ELL and trying to identify the difficulty and the factors that contribute to those difficulties can help the teacher to find better ways for teaching.

There are several previous studies which discuss students' reading difficulties in the last 10 years. Lubis & Dwinata (2024) analysis about students' difficulties factor in reading comprehension and they found that long sentences and lack of strategies causing students' difficulties in reading. Similarly, Pranoto (2021) found the same factors namely long sentences that cause students difficulties in reading comprehension. Balqis (2022) also highlighted some factors behind students' reading comprehension difficulties including vocabulary, sentences, paragraphs and text comprehension. The similarities between the previous study and this study are to investigate the same problem which is students' learning difficulties in reading comprehension and the factors contributing to the learning difficulties. There are also differences contrary to the previous studies and this study. This study investigates the reading difficulties of the 9th grade students while the previous studies focused on 8th grade students. In addition, this study is conducted at different settings, SMP Negeri 3 Kombi in grade 9th.

Based on the aforementioned explanation, the present study aims at investigating the learning difficulties faced by the students in reading text and the factors contributing to those learning difficulties. This study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of literature of reading, teaching and learning. This research is also expected to be a reference for further studies that explore various teaching techniques to improve reading skills and to overcome the learning difficulties in reading recount text, as well as their implications for the education curriculum at the junior high school level. Practically, this study has a practical contribution for English teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Kombi where information related to learning difficulties faced by students in learning to read recount text can be used as a reference for choosing better reading learning strategies and methods. The students can also use the information in this study as a reference for them in knowing the weaknesses that they need to improve in learning to read recount text.

METHOD

This research employed qualitative descriptive research method through case study approach at SMP Negeri 3 Kombi. Qualitative descriptive research is a method that focuses on collecting and analyzing descriptive data in the form of words rather than numbers (Gundrum, 2022). Meanwhile, the case study approach, as described by Robert K. Yin (2018), is a research method that involves in-depth, detailed investigation of a particular instance, event, or phenomenon within its real-life context. It allows researchers to explore complex issues by using multiple sources of evidence, such as interviews, documents, and observations, to gather rich data and gain a comprehensive understanding of the case.

The case study method is especially useful for studying contemporary issues where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined. This study focuses on a particular phenomenon which describes natural situations. As what Yin stated, qualitative research is all about deeply exploring and understanding real-life issues through detailed observation and analysis, especially in complex, real-world settings. Thus, through this study the researcher tried to identify and analyze the factors contribute students learning difficulties in reading comprehension.

This research was conducted at SMP N 3 Kombi which is located on Tulap village, Minahasa regency. SMP N 3 Kombi is accredited B by the National Accreditation Board. The school has 29 students and 10 teachers with only one English teacher. The research was conducted on 2024-2025 academic year. The 9th grade at SMP Negeri 3 Kombi consist of 8 students (1 female and 7 male). The average age is 14 and all of the students started to learn English from 7th grade. Purposive sampling was used to select the subject of this research.

The researcher employed two data collection techniques to conduct this research. There is documentation and open-ended interviews. Bowen (2009) defines documentation as a systematic examination of documents such as reports, letters, meeting minutes, manuals, or test results in order to extract relevant information. In this research, the researcher used documentation to know students' score on reading comprehension, specifically the recount text. The researcher utilized the reading test results documented by the teacher. In other words, the researcher used secondhand document, since the test result was documented by the teacher first before being utilized by the researcher. The researcher also used close-ended interviews. The interview consists of 17 questions that are constructed based on Westwood's (2008) theory of the factors affecting students' difficulties in reading comprehension. The purpose of the interview was to identify the elements contributing to students' challenges in reading comprehension. Several questions were posed to students, including inquiries into their thoughts on reading in English and the typical obstacles they encounter when struggling to comprehend English texts.

The data obtained was analyzed using the model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). They noted that qualitative research involves analyzing three components (p.30-32). The steps include data condensation, display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. Data condensation involves selection, emphasis, simplification, abstraction, and transformation of information found in the complete set of written field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical sources. By condensing, we're making data stronger. The second step in qualitative data analysis is to create a data display. A data display is a structured and concise collection of information that facilitates the process of drawing conclusions and taking action. The final aspect of analytical activity involves drawing and verifying conclusions. Conclusion is a technique that addresses research questions and objectives. Conclusions are also known as the analysis proceeds at this stage, the researcher verifies and determines the answers to the research questions through the display of data.

FINDINGS

Students' Reading Difficulties

To find the data related to the students' reading difficulties, the researchers analyzed the reading test administered by the English teacher at SMPN 3 Kombi to the 9th grade students. The material used for the reading test is Recount text. The test administered assesses 5 important aspects of reading comprehension: finding main idea, finding detailed information, making inferences, locating references, and vocabulary knowledge. Those aspects mentioned above are in line with the theory of the elements of reading comprehension proposed by Nuttal (2000).

The analysis of the test results showed that 8 students took the test in which only 2 students passed the test, and the rest failed to achieve the minimum score required to pass the test, 65 (The complete test result can be seen in the appendix). The detailed analysis on the students' test result is presented based on Nuttal's (2000) theory on the elements of reading comprehension. Based on the calculation of students' test, the result for each item and each element of reading comprehension is classified into three categories proposed by Arikunto (2010).

Table 1. Classification of the Item Difficulties

Range	Classification
0-30	Easy
31-70	Moderate
71-100	Difficult

Students' Difficulty in Answering Main Idea Questions

The first aspect of reading comprehension according to Nuttal (2000) is to determine the main idea from the text. Based on the result of the students' reading test, the researcher found the following result representing students' answer for the questions of determining main idea in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' Difficulty in Answering Main Idea Question

No	Question Items' Number	The Number of Incorrect Answer	Percentage of Difficulty Per Question Item	The Percentage of Reading for Determining Main Idea
1	4	5	62.5%	35%
2	6	2	25%	
3	14	3	37.5%	
4	19	0	0%	
5	21	4	50%	

The analysis indicates that five students (62.5%) answered question number 4 incorrectly, classifying it as a moderate question. Meanwhile, two students (25%) answered question number 6 incorrectly, which categorizes it as an easy question. Additionally, three students (37.5%) struggled with question number 14, placing it in the moderate category. Notably, question number 19 had no incorrect responses (0%), asking it a very easy question. Four students (50%) answered question number 21 incorrectly, classifying it as a moderate question. Based on the overall percentage of difficulty, the calculated difficulty percentage for this set of questions is 35%, indicating that the main idea questions fall within the moderate category for student comprehension.

Students' Difficulty in Answering Locating Reference Questions

The second aspect of reading comprehension according to Nuttal (2000) is to locate references from the text. Based on the result of the students' reading test, the researcher found the following result representing students' answer for the questions of locating references in Table 3.

Table 3. Students' Difficulty in Answering Locating References Question

No	Question Items' Number	The Number of Incorrect Answer	Percentage of Difficulty Per Question Item	The Percentage of Reading for Locating References
1	3	3	37.5%	25%
2	9	2	25%	
3	11	2	25%	
4	20	2	25%	
5	24	1	12.5%	

From the data, it is observed that 3 students (37.5%) answered question number 3 incorrectly, indicating that the question falls into the "moderate" category. Additionally, 2 students (25%) provided incorrect answers for question number 9, suggesting that this question is considered "easy." Similarly, question number 11 was incorrectly answered by 2 students (25%), categorizing it as "easy." The same applies

to question number 20, where 2 students (25%) answered incorrectly, placing it in the "easy" category. Meanwhile, question number 24 was answered incorrectly by only 1 student (12.5%), which classifies it as "very easy." Based on the percentage calculations of difficulty, the overall difficulty level of these five questions is found to be 25%. This suggests that the set of questions is generally categorized as "easy" for students in answering reading comprehension questions, particularly those related to locating references.

Students' Difficulty in Answering Vocabulary Questions

The third aspect of reading comprehension according to Nuttal (2000) is to understand vocabulary from the text. Based on the result of the students' reading test, the researcher found the following result representing students' answer for the questions of understanding vocabulary in Table 4.

Table 4. Students' Difficulty in Answering Vocabulary Questions

No	Question Items' Number	The Number of Incorrect Answer	Percentage of Difficulty Per Question Item	The Percentage of Reading for Understanding Vocabulary
1	5	8	100%	55%
2	8	2	25%	
3	12	4	50%	
4	18	4	50%	
5	22	4	50%	

Based on the results, all students (100%) answered question number 5 incorrectly, indicating that it falls into the difficult category. Additionally, 2 students (25%) answered question number 8 incorrectly, which classifies it as an easy question. Meanwhile, 4 students (50%) got question number 12 wrong, meaning it is categorized as moderate. Similarly, question number 18 was answered incorrectly by 4 students (50%), also placing it in the moderate category. Likewise, 4 students (50%) answered question number 22 incorrectly, which means it is considered a moderate question. From the overall percentage of difficulty calculation, the difficult item percentage for these five questions is 55%. This suggests that, on average, the questions fall into the moderate category in assessing students' ability to comprehend reading material and understand vocabulary.

Students' Difficulty in Answering Making Inference Questions

The fourth aspect of reading comprehension according to Nuttal (2000) is to make inference from the text. Based on the result of the students' reading test, the researcher found the following result representing students' answer for the questions of making inference in Table 5.

Table 5. Students' Difficulty in Answering Making Inference Questions

No	Question Items' Number	The Number of Incorrect Answer	Percentage of Difficulty Per Question Item	The Percentage of Reading for Making Inference
1	1	3	37.5%	45%
2	10	1	12.5%	
3	15	5	62.5%	
4	17	5	62.5%	
5	23	4	50%	

The data indicates that 3 students (37.5%) answered question number 1 incorrectly, classifying it as a moderate question. Additionally, only 1 student (12.5%) got question number 10 wrong, suggesting that it falls into the easy category. Both question numbers 15 and 17 had 5 students (62.5%) answering incorrectly, categorizing them as moderate in terms of difficulty. Meanwhile, question number 23 was answered incorrectly by 4 students (50%), which also places it in the moderate category. Based on the overall percentage of difficulty calculated from these five questions, the difficulty level stands at 45%. This suggests that, in general, the questions are considered moderate in assessing students' ability to make inferences while reading.

Students' Difficulty in Answering Finding Detail Information Questions

The fifth aspect of reading comprehension according to Nuttal (2000) is to find detail information from the text. Based on the result of the students' reading test, the researcher found the following result representing students' answer for the questions of finding detail information in Table 6.

Table 6. Students' Difficulty in Answering Finding Detail Information Questions

No	Question Items' Number	The Number of Incorrect Answer	Percentage of Difficulty Per Question Item	The Percentage of Reading for Finding Detail Information
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1	2	5	62.5%	35%
2	7	1	12.5%	
3	13	4	50%	
4	16	2	25%	
5	25	2	25%	

The analysis shows that 5 students (62.5%) answered question number 2 incorrectly, indicating that it falls into the moderate category. Additionally, only 1 student (12.5%) got question number 7 wrong, classifying it as an easy question. 4 students (50%) provided incorrect answers to question number 13, meaning it is also categorized as moderate. Meanwhile, question number 16 was answered incorrectly by 2 students (25%), placing it in the easy category. Similarly, 2 students (25%) answered question number 25 incorrectly, which also falls under the easy category. Based on the overall difficulty percentage, the difficult item percentage for these five question items is calculated at 35%, which suggests that the questions are generally categorized as moderate for students when identifying details in reading comprehension.

Factors Contributing to Students' Reading Difficulties

To analyze the factors contributing to the reading difficulties in reading recount text faced by the 9th grade students, the researchers interviewed all the students who took the test. The interview focuses on two important areas: students' general reading experiences and factors contributing to students' reading difficulties. The analysis on the data obtained through interview for the students' reading difficulties is based on Westwood's (2008) theory of reading difficulties which consists of limited vocabulary knowledge, lack of fluency, lack of familiarity with the subject matter, difficulty level of the text, general reading experience, inadequate use of effective reading strategies, problem in recalling information after reading, problem with processing information & weak verbal reasoning.

General Reading Experiences

To understand students' general reading experience, the researcher utilized the item No. 13 to No. 17. These five questions focus on: Preferred types of texts, Silent vs. reading preferences, Feelings about answering questions after reading, Teacher support for comprehension, Frequency of reading English texts outside class. The following table describes students' general reading experience.

Table 7. General Reading Experience

Q13: Jenis teks apa yang paling Anda sukai untuk dibaca, dan mengapa? (What kinds of texts do you enjoy reading the most, and why?)	
Respondent 1	<i>Recount teks, karena saya bisa menceritakan pengalaman saya melalui teks recount.</i> Recount text, because I can tell my experience through recount text.
Respondent 2	<i>Recount teks, karena itu menceritakan peristiwa yang telah berlalu</i> Recount text, because it recounts events that have passed
Respondent 3	<i>Teks deskripsi karena itu teks yang dapat mendeskripsikan orang lain</i> Descriptive text because it is a text that can describe another person
Respondent 4	<i>Recount teks. Karena itu menceritakan kejadian yang sudah berlalu dan mengingatkan kejadian tersebut</i> Recount text. Because it tells of events that have passed and reminds of those events
Respondent 5	<i>Recount teks, karena dapat menceritakan tentang kejadian yang saya alami di masalalu</i> Recount text, because it can tell about events that I experienced in the past
Respondent 6	<i>Recount teks, karena menceritakan hal-hal yang sudah berlalu</i> Recount text, because it tells about things that have already happened.
Respondent 7	<i>Recount teks, karena menceritakan peristiwa yang sudah berlalu</i> Recount text, because it tells about events in the past
Respondent 8	<i>Recount teks, karena menceritakan masa lampau</i> Recount text, because it tells about the past
Q14: Apakah Anda lebih suka membaca dalam hati atau dengan suara keras? Bagaimana hal ini mempengaruhi pemahaman Anda? (Do you prefer reading silently or aloud? How does this affect your understanding?)	
Respondent 1	<i>Saya lebih suka membaca dalam hati karena itu dapat membantu saya untuk tenang dan lebih memahami isi teks</i> I prefer to read silently because it helps me to calm down and understand the text better.
Respondent 2	<i>Saya lebih suka membaca dalam hati karena lebih fokus</i> I prefer to read silently because it is more focused
Respondent 3	<i>Dalam hati karena lebih fokus dan tidak mengganggu</i> Silently because it is more focused and less distracting

Respondent 4	<i>Dalam hati karena itu membantu saya untuk lebih fokus untuk memahami bacaan tersebut</i> By heart because it helps me to focus more on understanding the text
Respondent 5	<i>Dalam hati karena bisa lebih fokus</i> By heart because it can make me more focused
Respondent 6	<i>Dalam hati karena itu dapat membuat saya lebih fokus</i> By heart because it can make me more focused
Respondent 7	<i>Suara keras, karena dapat membuat saya lebih cepat mengerti</i> Loud voice, because it can make me understand faster
Respondent 8	<i>Dalam hati karena membuat saya lebih fokus</i> In my heart because it makes me more focused
Q15: Bagaimana perasaan Anda ketika Anda diminta untuk menjawab pertanyaan setelah membaca suatu bacaan? (How do you feel when you are asked to answer questions after reading a passage?)	
Respondent 1	<i>Gugup</i> Nervous
Respondent 2	<i>Gugup</i> Nervous
Respondent 3	<i>Gugup</i> Nervous
Respondent 4	<i>Panik</i> Panic
Respondent 5	<i>Panik</i> Panic
Respondent 6	<i>Panik</i> Panic
Respondent 7	<i>Gugup</i> Nervous
Respondent 8	<i>Gugup</i> Nervous
Q16: Apa yang dapat dilakukan guru Anda untuk membantu Anda lebih memahami dan mengingat apa yang Anda baca? (What could your teacher do to help you better understand and remember what you read?)	
Respondent 1	<i>Dengan memberi clue</i> By giving clues
Respondent 2	<i>Dengan menjelaskan ulang</i> By re-explaining
Respondent 3	<i>Dengan menjelaskan ulang</i> By re-explaining
Respondent 4	<i>Memberitahukan tentang teks tersebut</i> Tells what the text is about
Respondent 5	<i>Menjelaskan ulang</i> By re-explaining
Respondent 6	<i>Membahas bacaan itu kembali</i> Going over the passage again
Respondent 7	<i>Menjelaskan kembali</i> Explaining again
Respondent 8	<i>Dengan menjelaskan ulang</i> By re-explaining
Q17: Seberapa sering Anda membaca teks bahasa Inggris di luar kelas? (How often do you read English texts outside of class?)	
Respondent 1	<i>Jarang</i> Rarely
Respondent 2	<i>Jarang</i> Rarely
Respondent 3	<i>Jarang</i> Rarely
Respondent 4	<i>Sering</i> Often
Respondent 5	<i>Jarang</i> Rarely
Respondent 6	<i>Jarang</i> Rarely
Respondent 7	<i>Jarang</i>

	Rarely
Respondent 8	Jarang
	Rarely

The majority of students enjoy reading recount texts because they relate to past experiences. For example, Respondent 1 stated, "*Recount text, because I can tell my experience through recount text,*" while Respondent 4 mentioned, "*Because it tells of events that have passed and reminds of those events.*" This preference suggests that students find personal connections in recount texts, which may make them easier to understand. Only one student, Respondent 3, preferred descriptive texts, indicating that most students are more comfortable with narrative-based reading rather than descriptive or expository styles.

Most students prefer reading silently because it helps them focus. Respondent 2 stated, "*I prefer to read silently because it is more focused,*" while Respondent 3 shared, "*Silently because it is more focused and less distracting.*" However, some students mentioned reading "by heart" (silently in their minds), which also helps them concentrate. Interestingly, only one student, Respondent 7, preferred reading aloud, stating, "*Loud voice, because it can make me understand faster.*" This suggests that while silent reading is the dominant preference, some students may benefit from vocalizing words to reinforce comprehension. Many students feel anxious when required to answer questions after reading. Respondents 1, 2, 3, and 7 expressed feeling "*Nervous,*" while Respondents 4, 5, and 6 stated they felt "*Panic.*" This suggests that reading comprehension assessments may create stress, potentially affecting students' ability to recall and analyze information. It highlights a need for strategies that reduce reading-related anxiety, such as guided discussions or confidence-building activities.

Students believe that teachers' explanations are crucial for improving their understanding. Respondent 2 stated, "*By re-explaining,*" while Respondent 4 suggested, "*Tells what the text is about.*" The repeated mention of "*re-explaining*" by multiple students indicates that they rely on teachers to clarify difficult concepts rather than independently developing comprehension strategies. This reinforces Westwood's (2008) claim that explicit instruction is necessary for improving reading skills. Most students rarely read English texts outside of class, which may contribute to their reading difficulties. Respondent 1 stated, "*Rare,*" and Respondent 3 answered, "*Rarely.*" Only one student, Respondent 4, reported reading often. This suggests that limited exposure to English texts outside of school may hinder vocabulary development and fluency, reinforcing the need for teachers to encourage more independent reading activities.

Limited Vocabulary Knowledge

Item No. 1 from the interview questions list focuses on finding out the reading difficulties because of students' vocabulary knowledge. The questions are "Do you often come across words you don't understand while reading? How do you handle them?"

Table 8. Limited Vocabulary Knowledge

Q1: Apakah Anda sering menemukan kata-kata yang tidak Anda pahami saat membaca? Bagaimana Anda mengatasinya? (Do you often come across words you don't understand while reading? How do you handle them?)	
Respondent 1	Ya, sering. Saya kemudian bertanya kepada guru arti kata tersebut Yes, often. I then asked the teacher the meaning of the word
Respondent 2	Ya, saya selalu mendapatkan kata-kata yang tidak saya pahami tapi itu hanya membutuhkan waktu untuk saya dapat mengerti arti kata tersebut Yes, I always get words that I don't understand but it just takes time for me to understand the meaning of the words.
Respondent 3	Ya, sering. Cara saya mengatasinya yaitu dengan cara bertanya pada guru atau mencarinya di google translate Yes, often. The way I overcome it is by asking the teacher or looking it up on google translate
Respondent 4	Ya, bertanya kepada guru atau mencarinya di google Yes, ask the teacher or look it up on google
Respondent 5	Sering dan saya mencarinya di google Often and I googled it
Respondent 6	Ya, saya mengatasinya dengan cara kembali membaca bacaan tersebut Yes, I overcame it by re-reading the passage
Respondent 7	Mencari di google Searching on Google
Respondent 8	Ya, dengan bertanya kepada guru atau mencari di kamus Yes, ask the teacher or look it up on google

Students' difficulties in reading comprehension, especially in recount texts, are significantly influenced by their limited vocabulary knowledge. Westwood (2008) emphasizes that vocabulary is essential for understanding texts, and this is evident in students' struggles. The interview responses indicate that all students frequently encounter unfamiliar words, which hinder their comprehension. For instance, Respondent 1 stated, "Yes, often. I then asked the teacher the meaning of the word" while Respondent 3 mentioned, "Yes, often. The way I overcome it is by asking the teacher or looking it up on google translate." This reliance on external assistance suggests that students often struggle to understand the meaning of the text independently, leading to delays in reading comprehension.

Students' strategies for overcoming vocabulary limitations indicate their dependence on translation tools or teacher support rather than contextual inference. Several students, such as Respondent 5 ("Often and I googled it") and Respondent 7 ("Searching on Google"), rely heavily on Google Translate. While this may provide quick answers, it does not necessarily help them develop a deeper understanding of vocabulary or improve their reading skills. Respondent 6 noted, "Yes, I overcame it by re-reading the passage" indicating that rereading alone is not always an effective strategy without sufficient vocabulary knowledge. These findings support Westwood's argument that teaching vocabulary explicitly is crucial in enhancing students' reading comprehension skills.

Lack of Fluency

Item No. 2 from the interview questions list focuses on finding out the reading difficulties because of students' lack of fluency. The question is "How does your reading speed affect your understanding of the text? (Open-ended)?".

Table 9. Lack of Fluency

Q2: Bagaimana kecepatan membaca Anda mempengaruhi pemahaman Anda terhadap teks? (Pertanyaan terbuka) (How does your reading speed affect your understanding of the text? (Open-ended))	
Respondent 1	<i>Jika saya membaca terlalu cepat saya akan sulit memahami isi teks</i> If I read too fast, it will be difficult for me to understand the text
Respondent 2	<i>Jika terdapat kata yang sulit itu dapat sangat mempengaruhi kecepatan membaca dan pemahaman saya</i> If there are difficult words it can greatly affect my reading speed and comprehension
Respondent 3	<i>Jika saya membaca dengan cepat saya sering melewati kata-kata penting jadi saya membaca secara perlahan agar dapat mengerti</i> If I read quickly, I often skip important words so I read slowly in order to understand
Respondent 4	<i>Sangat berpengaruh</i> Very influential
Respondent 5	<i>Saya membaca dengan cepat dan itu lebih membuat saya mengerti</i> I read quickly and it makes me understand more.
Respondent 6	<i>Saya membaca dengan perlahan agar bisa lebih mengerti</i> I read slowly in order to understand better
Respondent 7	<i>Perlahan karena lebih membuat saya mengerti</i> Slowly because it makes me understand more
Respondent 8	<i>Lambat, karena itu dapat membantu saya lebih memahami isi teks</i> Slow, because it can help me better understand the content of the text.

Students' lack of fluency in reading recount texts affects their comprehension, aligning with Westwood's (2008) argument that reading too slowly or too quickly leads to poor understanding. Several students admitted that their reading speed influences their ability to grasp the text. Respondent 1 stated, "If I read too fast, it will be difficult for me to understand the text," indicating that rushing through a text result in comprehension difficulties. Similarly, Respondent 3 noted, "If I read quickly, I often skip important words so I read slowly in order to understand." These responses suggest that fast reading often causes students to overlook key details, leading to gaps in understanding. On the other hand, Respondent 2 pointed out that encountering difficult words ("If there are difficult words it can greatly affect my reading speed and comprehension") slows down the reading process, further disrupting comprehension.

Some students believe that reading slowly aids understanding, but this approach may also have limitations. Respondent 6 mentioned, "I read slowly in order to understand better," while Respondent 8 similarly stated, "Slow, because it can help me better understand the content of the text." While a slower pace allows for careful processing, Westwood (2008) warns that excessive slowness can hinder comprehension by making students focus too much on individual words rather than the overall meaning of the text. This suggests that students struggling with fluency may benefit from balanced reading strategies that encourage both accuracy and efficiency. Without improving their reading fluency,

students' risk either misinterpreting texts due to excessive speed or losing sight of the bigger picture by reading too slowly.

Lack of Familiarity with the Subject Matter

Item No. 3 & 4 from the interview questions list focuses on finding out the reading difficulties because of students' lack of the familiarity with the subject matter. The questions are "How does knowing something about a topic before reading help you understand the text better?" and "What helps you the most when starting a new topic—pictures, videos, or class discussions?".

Table 10. Lack of Familiarity with the Subject Matter

Q3: <i>Bagaimana mengetahui sesuatu tentang suatu topik sebelum membaca dapat membantu Anda memahami teks dengan lebih baik?</i> (How does knowing something about a topic before reading help you understand the text better?)	
Respondent 1	<i>Ya, sangat membantu saya untuk lebih cepat mengerti</i> Yes, it really helps me to understand faster
Respondent 2	<i>Karena jika sudah di beritahu akan lebih mudah mengerti</i> Because if you have been told, it will be easier to understand
Respondent 3	<i>Saya jadi lebih mengerti karena sudah mengetahui topiknya</i> I understand better because I already know the topic
Respondent 4	<i>Lebih mudah mengerti bacaan tersebut</i> It is easier to understand the reading
Respondent 5	<i>Ya</i> Yes
Respondent 6	<i>Ya, dapat lebih memahami teks</i> Yes, better understanding of the text
Respondent 7	<i>Lebih paham karena sudah di beritahukan sebelumnya</i> Understand better because it has been told beforehand
Respondent 8	<i>Lebih mengerti</i> More understanding
Q4: <i>Apa yang paling membantu Anda saat memulai topik baru-gambar, video, atau diskusi kelas?</i> (What helps you the most when starting a new topic—pictures, videos, or class discussions?)	
Respondent 1	<i>Diskusi kelas</i> Class discussion
Respondent 2	<i>Video</i> Video
Respondent 3	<i>Video</i> Video
Respondent 4	<i>Video</i> Video
Respondent 5	<i>Video</i> Video
Respondent 6	<i>Diskusi kelas</i> Class discussion
Respondent 7	<i>Diskusi kelas</i> Class discussion
Respondent 8	<i>Gambar</i> Picture

Students' difficulties in reading recount texts due to a lack of familiarity with the subject matter affect their comprehension, aligning with Westwood's (2008) argument that familiarity with a topic makes reading easier and improves understanding. The interview responses indicate that students find it easier to understand a text when they are familiar with the topic. For example, Respondent 1 stated, "Yes, it really helps me to understand faster," while Respondent 3 mentioned, "I understand better because I already know the topic." This supports the idea that background knowledge helps students connect new information with what they already know, allowing for better comprehension. Conversely, when students lack familiarity, they may struggle to grasp key concepts, making it harder to follow the flow of events in a recount text.

The students' responses highlight the importance of introducing a topic before reading to improve comprehension. Respondent 2 noted, "Because if you have been told, it will be easier to understand," emphasizing that prior exposure to the subject matter reduces confusion. This aligns with Westwood's recommendation that teachers should build familiarity using contextual aids before introducing the text itself. Without this preparation, students may find it difficult to engage with the reading, leading to poor

retention and misunderstandings of key details. This suggests that educators should implement strategies such as pre-reading discussions or multimedia resources to support students with limited background knowledge.

The interview also reveals students' preferences for different learning aids when approaching new topics, which can influence their comprehension. A majority of students found videos helpful, with Respondent 5 simply stating, "Video," while Respondent 4 noted, "Video," as well. Others preferred class discussions, as mentioned by Respondent 1 ("Class discussion") and Respondent 7 ("Class discussion"). This indicates that a combination of visual and interactive methods can enhance students' understanding before they engage with a text. Westwood (2008) suggests that using various instructional techniques, such as videos, images, and discussions, can bridge the gap between unfamiliar content and students' comprehension abilities. By incorporating these methods, teachers can help students build familiarity, leading to improved reading comprehension in recount texts.

Difficulty Level of the Text

Item No. 5 from the interview questions list focuses on finding out the reading difficulties because of students' difficulty level of the text. The question is "Do you find some reading materials too difficult to understand? What makes them difficult for you?".

Table 11. Difficulty Level of the Text

Q5: Apakah Anda merasa beberapa bahan bacaan terlalu sulit untuk dipahami? Apa yang membuat mereka sulit bagi Anda? (Do you find some reading materials too difficult to understand? What makes them difficult for you?)	
Respondent 1	<i>Terdapat beberapa kosa kata yang sulit saya pahami</i> There were some vocabulary words that were difficult for me to understand
Respondent 2	<i>Ya, karena pemilihan kosa kata yang sulit dimengerti</i> Yes, because of the choice of vocabulary that is difficult to understand
Respondent 3	<i>Ya, karena terdapat kata-kata yang sulit dipahami</i> Yes, because there are words that are difficult to understand
Respondent 4	<i>Ya, karena saya tidak mengerti beberapa arti kata</i> Yes, because I didn't understand some of the meanings of the words
Respondent 5	<i>Ya, karena pemilihan kata yang sulit</i> Yes, because of the difficult word choice
Respondent 6	<i>Ya, karena terdapat kata-kata yang sulit dimengerti</i> Yes, because there are words that are difficult to understand
Respondent 7	<i>Ya, karena terdapat banyak kata-kata sulit</i> Yes, because there are many difficult words
Respondent 8	<i>Ya, karena pemilihan kata yang terlalu sulit</i> Yes, because the word choice is too difficult

Students' difficulties in reading comprehension, especially in recount texts, are significantly influenced by the difficulty level of the text, aligning with Westwood's (2008) argument that complex vocabulary and sentence structures can hinder understanding. The interview responses indicate that most students struggle with difficult words, making it hard for them to comprehend the text as a whole. For instance, Respondent 1 stated, "There were some vocabulary words that were difficult for me to understand," while Respondent 4 similarly mentioned, "Yes, because I didn't understand some of the meanings of the words." These responses suggest that unfamiliar vocabulary is a major barrier to reading comprehension. When students encounter too many difficult words, they focus more on deciphering individual terms rather than understanding the overall meaning of the text.

Multiple students emphasized that complex word choices contribute to their struggles with reading recount texts. Respondent 2 noted, "Yes, because of the choice of vocabulary that is difficult to understand," while Respondent 7 shared, "Yes, because there are many difficult words." This highlights that the level of vocabulary in a text must be appropriate for students' reading abilities to ensure comprehension. Westwood (2008) suggests that adjusting reading materials to match students' proficiency levels is essential for effective learning. If texts are too challenging, students may become discouraged and disengaged, ultimately affecting their reading development. To address this, teachers should provide scaffolded reading materials with appropriate vocabulary support, ensuring students gradually build their comprehension skills without being overwhelmed by difficult texts.

Inadequate Use of Effective Reading Strategies

Item No. 6 & 7 from the interview questions list focuses on finding out the reading difficulties because of students' inadequate use of effective reading strategies. The questions as "Have your

teachers taught you any strategies to help you understand what you read? Can you describe them?" and "When you don't understand a text, what strategies do you use to improve your understanding? (e.g., skimming, summarizing, guessing word meaning)".

Table 12. Inadequate Use of Effective Reading Strategies

Q6: Apakah guru Anda pernah mengajarkan strategi untuk membantu Anda memahami apa yang Anda baca? Dapatkah Anda menjelaskannya? (Have your teachers taught you any strategies to help you understand what you read? Can you describe them?)	
Respondent 1	Ya, guru saya mengajarkan saya untuk membacanya berulang kali Yes, my teacher taught me to read it over and over again
Respondent 2	Ya, pernah Yes, I have
Respondent 3	Guru menyuruh untuk membaca berulang kali sampai mengerti The teacher tells them to read repeatedly until they understand
Respondent 4	Tidak No
Respondent 5	Pernah, dengan menyuruh saya membaca bagian-bagian teks secara berulang Yes, by asking me to read parts of the text repeatedly
Respondent 6	Ya, dibahas kembali Yes, reviewed
Respondent 7	Ya, guru menyuruh saya untuk membacanya berulang kali Yes, the teacher told me to read it repeatedly
Respondent 8	Guru menyuruh saya untuk membaca berulang kali The teacher told me to read it repeatedly
Q7: Ketika Anda tidak memahami suatu teks, strategi apa yang Anda gunakan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman Anda? (misalnya, membaca sekilas, meringkas, menebak arti kata) (When you don't understand a text, what strategies do you use to improve your understanding? (e.g., skimming, summarizing, guessing word meaning))	
Respondent 1	Membacanya secara berulang kali Reading it repeatedly
Respondent 2	Menebak arti kata Guessing the meaning of words
Respondent 3	Menebak arti kata Guessing the meaning of words
Respondent 4	Menebak arti kata Guessing the meaning of words
Respondent 5	Menebak arti kata Guessing the meaning of words
Respondent 6	Menebak arti kata Guessing the meaning of words
Respondent 7	Meringkas Summarize
Respondent 8	Menebak arti kata Guessing the meaning of words

Students' difficulties in reading comprehension, especially in recount texts, are significantly influenced by the inadequate use of effective reading strategies, aligning with Westwood's (2008) argument that students need structured guidance in employing comprehension techniques. The interview responses reveal that while some students have received reading strategy instruction, it is often limited to repetitive reading. For example, Respondent 1 stated, "Yes, my teacher taught me to read it over and over again," while Respondent 3 similarly mentioned, "The teacher tells them to read repeatedly until they understand." This suggests that many teachers focus on re-reading as the primary strategy, rather than incorporating diverse comprehension techniques such as summarizing or predicting. While repetition can aid retention, Westwood (2008) highlights that reading should be taught as a thinking activity, requiring strategies that actively engage students in making sense of the text.

Students' personal strategies for improving comprehension show a heavy reliance on guessing word meanings rather than employing structured reading techniques. Several respondents, such as Respondent 2 ("Guessing the meaning of words") and Respondent 5 ("Guessing the meaning of words"), reported guessing words as their main strategy. While inferencing is a valuable skill, it should be complemented by other approaches, such as using context clues or summarization, to ensure a deeper understanding. However, only one student, Respondent 7, mentioned summarizing ("Summarize"), which indicates that structured comprehension strategies are not widely practiced. Westwood (2008)

notes that many teachers do not devote enough time to teaching students how to apply comprehension skills, which may explain why students rely on limited and often ineffective strategies.

The findings suggest a need for teachers to introduce a wider range of reading strategies to enhance students' comprehension of recount texts. Effective methods such as skimming, scanning, summarizing, and predicting content can help students process information more efficiently. Additionally, Respondent 6's answer, "Yes, *discussed again*," indicates that classroom discussions can be beneficial in reinforcing comprehension. By diversifying reading strategies beyond repetitive reading and guessing, educators can better support students in developing strong analytical and comprehension skills, ultimately improving their ability to understand recount texts more effectively.

Weak Verbal Reasoning

Item No. 8 & 9 from the interview questions list focuses on finding out the reading difficulties because of students' weak verbal reasoning. The questions are "Do you find it difficult to connect ideas from different parts of a text? Can you give an example?" and "When reading, how do you figure out the meaning of unfamiliar ideas or arguments?".

Table 13. Weak Verbal Reasoning

Q8: Apakah Anda merasa sulit untuk menghubungkan ide-ide dari berbagai bagian teks? Dapatkah Anda memberikan contoh? (Do you find it difficult to connect ideas from different parts of a text? Can you give an example?)	
Respondent 1	Ya, contohnya saya kesulitan Ketika menggabungkan ide dari kalimat pertama dan kalimat berikutnya Yes, for example, I have difficulty when combining ideas from the first sentence and the next sentence
Respondent 2	Ya, contohnya untuk menghubungkan idea dari beberapa kalimat Yes, for example to connect ideas from several sentences
Respondent 3	Tidak No
Respondent 4	Tidak No
Respondent 5	Ya, contohnya untuk menghubungkan ide per paragraf Yes, for example to connect ideas per paragraph
Respondent 6	Tidak, saya dapat menghubungkannya No, I can connect them
Respondent 7	Ya, contohnya saya sering kesulitan menghubungkan ide-ide yang berada di dalam suatu teks Yes, for example I often struggle to connect ideas within a text
Respondent 8	Ya, contohnya untuk menggabungkan ide dari 2 kalimat Yes, for example to combine ideas from 2 sentences
Q9: Ketika membaca, bagaimana Anda mencari tahu arti dari gagasan atau argumen yang tidak dikenal? (When reading, how do you figure out the meaning of unfamiliar ideas or arguments?)	
Respondent 1	Saya mencoba bertanya kepada teman sekelas saya I tried asking my classmates
Respondent 2	Dengan membaca berulang kali sampai mengerti artinya By reading repeatedly until you understand the meaning
Respondent 3	Saya dapat mentranslatenya di google translate I can translate it on google translate
Respondent 4	Bertanya kepada guru atau mencari di google Ask the teacher or google it
Respondent 5	Mencoba memahami Trying to understand
Respondent 6	Bertanya kepada guru Ask the teacher
Respondent 7	Ya, contohnya saya sering kesulitan menghubungkan ide-ide yang berada di dalam suatu teks By reading repeatedly until you understand the meaning
Respondent 8	Bertanya kepada guru atau teman Ask the teacher or friends

Students' difficulties in reading recount texts due to weak verbal reasoning are evident in their struggles to connect ideas within the text. Westwood (2008) explains that weak verbal reasoning hinders students from linking new information with prior knowledge, making it difficult to process and analyze texts. The

interview results show that several students face challenges in understanding the logical flow of ideas in recount texts. Respondent 1 stated, " Yes, for example, I have difficulty when combining ideas from the first sentence and the next sentence," while Respondent 5 mentioned, " Yes, for example to connect ideas per paragraph." These responses suggest that some students struggle to see how sentences and paragraphs are related, leading to fragmented comprehension of the story or event being recounted.

Students with weak verbal reasoning often rely on external help instead of developing their own analytical skills. Many students admitted to asking teachers or friends for clarification when they encountered difficulties in understanding ideas. For example, Respondent 1 said, " I tried asking my classmates," and Respondent 8 shared, " Ask the teacher or friends." While seeking help is beneficial, excessive dependence on others indicates a lack of independent comprehension strategies. Additionally, some students, like Respondent 2 and Respondent 7, reported rereading the text multiple times ("By reading repeatedly until you understand the meaning "), which, although helpful, may not always be effective in developing reasoning skills. This pattern highlights the need for explicit instruction in critical thinking and inferencing skills to help students process and analyze texts independently.

Not all students experience difficulties with verbal reasoning, indicating that individual differences in cognitive abilities and prior exposure to reading may play a role. Respondent 3 and Respondent 6, for example, expressed confidence in their ability to connect ideas within a text, suggesting they have developed better comprehension strategies. However, since a majority of students reported difficulties, it is crucial for educators to address this issue by incorporating structured reading strategies, such as teaching students how to identify relationships between ideas and use context clues. Without improving verbal reasoning, students may continue to struggle with reading comprehension, ultimately affecting their academic performance across subjects that require textual understanding.

Problems with Processing Information

Item No. 10 from the interview questions list focuses on finding out the reading difficulties because of students' problems with processing information. The question is "Do you find it easier to understand a text if you read it more than once? Why?".

Table 14. Problems with Processing Information

Q10: Bagaimana kecepatan membaca Anda mempengaruhi pemahaman Anda terhadap teks? (Pertanyaan terbuka) (Do you find it easier to understand a text if you read it more than once? Why?)	
Respondent 1	Ya, karena itu dapat membantu saya memahami lebih mendalam arti teks tersebut Yes, because it can help me understand more deeply the meaning of the text
Respondent 2	Ya, karena lebih dapat membantu memahami Yes, because it helps me understand more
Respondent 3	Ya, karena saya jadi lebih memahaminya Yes, because I understand it better
Respondent 4	Ya, karena jika membaca lebih dari sekali dapat membantu untuk memahami dan melafalkan arti kata tersebut Yes, because reading more than once helps to understand and pronounce the meaning of the word
Respondent 5	Ya, lebih bisa dimengerti karena sudah dibaca berulang kali Yes, it's more understandable because it's been read over and over again.
Respondent 6	Ya, karena lebih mengerti Yes, because it makes me understand more
Respondent 7	Ya, karena membuat saya lebih mengerti Yes, because it makes me understand more
Respondent 8	Ya, karena itu membuat saya lebih cepat paham Yes, because it makes me understand faster

Students' difficulties in reading comprehension, particularly in recount texts, are closely related to problems with processing information, aligning with Westwood's (2008) argument that working memory plays a crucial role in reading. The interview responses indicate that many students require multiple readings to fully grasp the text. For example, Respondent 4 stated, " Yes, because reading more than once helps to understand and pronounce the meaning of the word," while Respondent 5 similarly mentioned, " Yes, it's more understandable because it's been read over and over again." These responses suggest that some students struggle to retain and process information effectively in a single reading, leading them to rely on repetition as a coping strategy. This supports Westwood's idea that slower readers should be encouraged to read multiple times to reinforce comprehension and memory retention.

Students acknowledge that reading speed influences their ability to process and understand texts. Respondent 1 noted, " Yes, because it can help me understand more deeply the meaning of the text," and Respondent 8 mentioned, " Yes, because it makes me understand faster." This highlights that students with stronger processing skills can benefit from faster reading, while those with weaker working memory may need additional support. Westwood (2008) emphasizes that students must retain information and make connections between ideas to fully comprehend a text. Therefore, educators should implement strategies such as guided reading, summarization, and discussion to help students improve their information-processing abilities, ensuring they can extract meaning from recount texts more efficiently.

Problems in Recalling Information After Reading

Item No. 11 & 12 from the interview questions list focuses on finding out the reading difficulties because of students' problems in recalling information after reading. The questions are "After reading a story or an article, how well do you remember the details? (*Very well / A little / Not at all*)" and "What do you do to help yourself remember what you read? (*Taking notes, discussing with friends, or rereading*)".

Table 15. Problems in Recalling Information After Reading

Q11: Setelah membaca sebuah cerita atau artikel, seberapa baik Anda mengingat detail-detailnya? (<i>Sangat baik / Sedikit / Tidak sama sekali</i>) (After reading a story or an article, how well do you remember the details? (<i>Very well / A little / Not at all</i>))	
Respondent 1	<i>Sedikit</i> A little bit
Respondent 2	<i>Sangat baik</i> Very good
Respondent 3	<i>Sedikit</i> A little bit
Respondent 4	<i>Sedikit</i> A little bit
Respondent 5	<i>Sedikit</i> A little bit
Respondent 6	<i>Sedikit</i> A little bit
Respondent 7	<i>Sedikit</i> A little bit
Respondent 8	<i>Sedikit</i> A little bit
Q12: Apa yang Anda lakukan untuk membantu diri Anda mengingat apa yang Anda baca? (<i>Mencatat, berdiskusi dengan teman, atau membaca ulang</i>) (What do you do to help yourself remember what you read? (<i>Taking notes, discussing with friends, or rereading</i>))	
Respondent 1	<i>Membaca ulang</i> Rereading
Respondent 2	<i>Mencatat</i> Take notes
Respondent 3	<i>Membaca ulang</i> Rereading
Respondent 4	<i>Membaca ulang</i> Rereading
Respondent 5	<i>Membaca ulang</i> Rereading
Respondent 6	<i>Membaca ulang</i> Rereading
Respondent 7	<i>Berdiskusi dengan teman</i> Discuss with friends
Respondent 8	<i>Membaca ulang</i> Rereading

Students' difficulties in recalling information after reading recount texts significantly affect their comprehension, aligning with Westwood's (2008) argument that recall depends on attention and the ability to connect new information with prior knowledge. The interview responses indicate that most students struggle with remembering details from a text. For example, Respondent 1 stated, "A little bit," when asked how well they recall details, while Respondent 5 similarly responded, "A little bit." This

suggests that many students retain only limited information after reading, which may indicate a lack of focus or ineffective reading strategies. According to Westwood, students who fail to pay attention while reading often struggle with recall, which directly impacts their ability to comprehend and analyze the text.

To compensate for their recall difficulties, most students rely on rereading as their primary strategy. Respondent 3 stated, "*Rereading*," while Respondent 6 also mentioned, "*Rereading*." This pattern suggests that students attempt to reinforce their memory by reviewing the text multiple times rather than employing more advanced strategies like summarization or visualization. While rereading can be helpful, Westwood (2008) emphasizes that effective recall requires actively engaging with the text rather than passively going through it again. This indicates a gap in students' reading strategies, as they may benefit from alternative techniques such as taking structured notes, creating mental associations, or discussing key points with peers.

Although the majority of students reported difficulties in recall, some students attempted alternative strategies to retain information. Respondent 2 stated, "*Take notes*," while Respondent 7 mentioned, "*Discuss with friends*." These responses indicate that note-taking and discussion can be beneficial in strengthening recall. Westwood (2008) highlights that students should be encouraged to connect new information with their prior knowledge to improve memory retention. Teachers can address this issue by incorporating active reading techniques, such as guided discussions and summarization exercises, to help students process and retain key details from recount texts more effectively.

DISCUSSIONS

Students Reading Difficulties

The findings of the study show that the ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Kombi faced significant difficulties in reading comprehension based on five elements by Nuttal's (2000) reading comprehension aspects. The findings on students' reading difficulties, as shown in the 4.4, demonstrate that limited vocabulary has the highest percentage with 55%. The findings indicate that most of the students find it hard to understand the content of recount text because they have very limited vocabulary. The results of several previous studies are also in line with the findings of the present study. The study conducted by Nurjanah (2018) found that the most difficult aspects of reading comprehension faced by students is vocabulary knowledge. Another study by Intan (2022) also showed that the most difficulty aspect faced by students in comprehending English reading exercise was vocabulary. A study conducted by Dila (2024) also found that the most difficult elements faced by students in reading comprehension was the vocabulary. Hence, having a lot of vocabulary and good knowledge of vocabulary can contribute to students' comprehension of the text they read.

The second element of reading comprehension with the highest level of difficulties is making inferences from the text. Findings in Table 4.5. show that questions related to making inferences have the difficulty level of 45%, which are moderate level. This level of difficulty is reasonable given that the questions related to making inferences are usually related to inferential reading. In other words, it is related to drawing a conclusion from the text they read (recount text). The previous study also indicates the same findings that the most difficulty faced by students in reading comprehension is making inferences which got 43.70% (Larasati, 2019). The ability to make inferences from the text depends on how often students read and practice reading. Hence, to overcome the difficulties in making inferences from text, students need to practice reading more and teacher need to introduce more types of reading text to the students, recount text for the context of SMP Negeri 3 Kombi.

On the third place, there are two elements of reading comprehension of related to reading difficulties: determining main idea and finding detail information from the text. The findings of this study showed that both determining the main idea and finding detailed information on the text have the difficulty level of 35%, which is moderate level of difficulty (See Table 4.2. and 4.6.). Both determining the main idea and finding detailed information are categorized literal reading comprehension, in which the information can be found in the text they read. The previous studies show that the most difficulty faced by students in reading comprehension determining the main idea which got 72% (Saraswati et al, 2021) and the most difficulty faced by students in reading comprehension is find the detailed information which got 67.5% (Sapitri et al, 2020). Students' ability to determine the main idea and identify detailed information in a text improves with frequent reading and practice. To strengthen these skills, they should engage in more reading activities. Teachers can also support this by introducing various types of texts. For students at SMP Negeri 3 Kombi, using recount texts can be an effective way to help them understand both the main ideas and specific details within a passage.

The last element of students' reading difficulties is locating references from the text. The findings of this study showed that the questions related to locating references have 25% level of difficulty, which

are easy level (see Table 4.3.). With the lowest difficulty level, it means that most of the students can answer questions related to locating references in the text. It is also reasonable since those kinds of questions are categorized as literal comprehension. In contrast, findings from the previous study conducted by Safitri (2023) showed that locating references questions are categorized in moderate difficulty level with 48.2%. The difference between the findings of the present study and the previous study should be investigated further.

Factors contributing to Students' Reading Difficulties

Vocabulary is an important aspect of reading comprehension as it helps students to understand a text better. Study conducted by Brooks et al (2023), Liando et al (2022) and Jamali et al (2021) highlighted the importance of vocabulary in helping students to understand the text they read. When students have a very limited vocabulary, they will struggle to understand the text or even can not understand the text they read. The findings of this study showed that all the students struggle to understand the recount text they read because of limited vocabulary. Because of this, students relied on external aid such as Google Translation or even asking their teachers to understand the words that are not familiar with the students. Teachers can utilize strategies such as explicit vocabulary instructions, contextual word learning and extensive reading to help the students to understand the recount text better.

Fluency is one of the crucial factors in reading activities because it maintains the balance between reading speed and comprehension. Several studies have shown that reading fluency plays an important role in reading comprehension (Klauda & Guthrie, 2008; Silverman et al, 2013; Kim & Petscher, 2021). Reading fluency in this research refers to the relationship between reading speed and comprehension: how fast or slow students read to understand text. The findings of this study show that students read recount text both in fast and slow speed. However, to comprehend the recount text they read, students prefer to read slowly since reading too fast can hinder them comprehending the text. To improve students' speed in reading while maintaining comprehension teachers can use strategies such as guided reading and timed reading exercises.

When reading a particular text, being familiar with the subject matter discussed in the text or having a background knowledge related to the topic of the text can be very helpful for the students. Background knowledge or familiarity with the subject matter assist the students in understanding the text. If the students have already become familiar with the text being discussed in the classroom, they will have a better chance to comprehend the text better and faster. Several previous studies conducted by Smith et al (2021), Siddiek & Alfaki (2013) and Chou (2011) found that the participants who received a list of vocabulary to study performed significantly better on reading comprehension. The findings of this study demonstrate that background knowledge contributes to the students' comprehension on the recount text they read. It indicates that teachers should help the students build their prior knowledge with well-designed pre-reading activities. The findings also highlight students' preferences of using video, picture and class discussion to build their background knowledge before reading activities.

Difficulty level of the text also contributes to the reading comprehension activities since it can help students to understand the text easily. If, for instance, the text has many difficult sentences, it would hinder students from comprehending the text. Several previous studies show that text difficulty levels significantly affect the students' reading comprehension (Amendum et al, 2018; Bahmani & Farvardin, 2017; Chiang, 2016; and et al, 2021). The findings of this study are also in line with the findings of the previous study in which the difficulty of the text plays an important role in understanding recount text they read. To mitigate this factor, teachers need to use some scaffolding techniques such as grade reading material, glossaries and simplifying texts for struggling readers.

To have better comprehension in reading, students must have good and effective reading strategies. The reading strategies will allow students to comprehend the text they read faster and better. Those strategies also enable the students to find the information in the text and do task related to the text effectively. The reading strategies include skimming, summarizing, predicting and using context clues. Several related studies found that reading strategies had a positive effect on students, it helped them to comprehend the text better (Banditvilai, 2020; Kūçūkoğlu, 2013; Lei et al; 2010; Sulung & Tuerah, 2021). The findings of this study demonstrate that the students have the preference of rereading or guessing word meaning as their reading strategies rather than using structured strategies such as skimming, summarizing, predicting and using context clues. Teachers can mitigate this factor by introducing and teaching about reading strategies such as skimming, summarizing, predicting and using context clues.

Verbal reasoning refers to the difficulties faced by someone in processing and analyzing verbal information such as arguments, conversations and texts. In reading comprehension, verbal reasoning allows students to connect ideas and logical relationships in a text. A study conducted by Trassi et al (2019) demonstrates that verbal reasoning can affect students' comprehension significantly, especially in predicting the reading text students read. As shown in the findings, it is found that students face difficulty in linking ideas across sentences and paragraphs in recount text they read. When the students do not have good verbal reasoning, they can not comprehend the text and will miss the content and information within the text. It means that teachers need to use some learning activities such as inferencing exercises, summarization tasks and text-structure analysis to strengthen reasoning skills.

In reading comprehension, information processing or working memory is essential because it helps students to process the information after they read a text. According to Nuttal (2000), information processing refers to the way readers interact with a text by actively decoding, understanding, and interpreting information. Several previous studies found that working memory training intervention is effective on all sub-component of reading difficulties tests (Daneman & Tardif, 2016; Peng et al, 2018; Sharifi & Rezaei; 2018). In this study, it is found that students rely on multiple reading to process the information they read. Multiple reading or reading the text several times is not an effective method for processing information within the text because it wastes time. Teachers are suggested to use various strategies such as breaking texts into smaller sections, annotating while reading and using graphic organizers or tables to promote a better comprehension of text.

Recalling information after reading or retention of information is one of the factors that can influence reading difficulties faced by the students. Retention of information (recalling information after reading) refers to a process to retrieve information that has been learned in the past. In reading, it refers to the ability to remember specific details from the text (Nuttal, 2000). High retention rate of information means that students absorb more information from the text they read. Students with high retention will have a better chance to understand the text better and digest the information easily. As seen in the findings of several previous studies, the benefits of action-based recall were reduced following enactment during presentation, suggesting that the positive effects of action at encoding and recall may have a common origin (Rahmani & Sadeghi, 2011; Joh & Schallert, 2014; Jaroslawska et al, 2016). The findings of this study show that students struggle with recalling details and general information, as the students rely too much on rereading to recall the information from text. It also indicates that students lack concentration when they are reading. Teachers are suggested to use strategies like summarization, visualization techniques and peer discussion to reinforce memory retention.

Implications for English Teaching and Learning

The findings of the present study reveal the reading comprehension difficulties faced 9th-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Kombi. The findings also highlight the need for specific instructional improvements in English language teaching and learning process at SMP Negeri 3 Kombi. One significant implication based on the findings of this study is the need for explicit vocabulary instruction, as students' low word knowledge impairs their ability to interpret texts (Westwood, 2008). To improve students' vocabulary knowledge, teachers should use direct vocabulary teaching approaches such word mapping, context-based learning, and intensive reading programs (Andries, et al, 2019; Chin, 2002; Pabur et al, 2023). In addition, students should be trained to read and engage with diverse reading materials to improve their word recognition and meaning inference skills. It would also help the students to reduce students' over-reliance on translation tools such as Google Translate (Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018).

Another significant implication based on the findings of this study is the need for improvement in reading fluency by using structured and interactive reading tasks. Many students, as shown in this study, struggled to balance reading speed with comprehension. It is in line with Rasinski's (2012) findings that fluency is an essential element for effective reading. Teachers are suggested to use guided reading, repeated reading exercises, and timed reading tasks to help students improve their accuracy (comprehension) and speed in reading activities. Jin et al (2022) then states that paired and group reading activities can promote peer learning and increase students' fluency and confidence in reading comprehension. Integrating instructional approaches that focus on students' fluency can help students to develop a more automatic and efficient reading process that improves overall comprehension.

The study also highlights the importance of building background knowledge before reading (doing pre-reading activities). It is very crucial since it helps the students to perform better when they are familiar with a topic discussed within the text. This implication confirms the schemata theory that claims that past knowledge or prior knowledge has significant impact on reading comprehension (Anderson et al., 1978).

Based on the schemata theory, teachers are encouraged to use pre-reading strategies or activities utilizing visual aids, videos, and brainstorming sessions (class discussions) to activate students' prior knowledge before engaging with a text (Grabe and Stoller, 2013). Teachers can also use guided questions and discussions to help students anticipate key ideas in the text as it will create more engaging and meaningful reading activities (Harvey and Goudvis, 2007). These strategies will help students bridge the gap between unfamiliar content in the text and their prior knowledge, thus improving their engagement and comprehension.

The last implication based on the findings of the study is the need for explicit instruction in reading strategies. As shown in the findings of this study, the students rely too much on rereading as their reading strategies to comprehend the text they read. Students, as shown in this study, rarely or never used the strategies used by skilled readers. According to Anthony (2022) skilled readers employ multiple strategies to extract the meaning from the text such as skimming, scanning, summarizing and predicting. Teachers are suggested to incorporate strategy-based reading instruction in which teachers clearly model and guide students through various reading comprehension strategies. Gradually, teachers need to introduce more advanced strategies or metacognitive strategies in reading activities such as self-questioning and summarization that can help students in improving their understanding and retention (Oakhill et al., 2014). By introducing and training students with various reading strategies, students can be more independent and more effective in doing the reading tasks given to them.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions, it can be concluded that 9th-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Kombi faced the reading difficulties in learning recount text. The difficulties they face are in the aspects of vocabulary, making inference and determining main idea. The study found that limited vocabulary knowledge is the most difficulty students faced and aligning the previous research that stated vocabulary knowledge is the key factor to understanding texts. Students also struggle with making inferences, because they need deeper thinking abilities to interpret the implicit meanings within the text. Another aspect, such as locating references, was found to be less difficult, showing that students generally skill to answer the questions. These findings suggest that improving vocabulary and making inferences should be priority to be taught for students.

This study also identified several factors contributing to students reading difficulties, including fluency, familiarity with the subject matter and ineffective reading strategies. Many students choose to read slowly to comprehend the text, but it can make them cannot process the text effectively. Students who lack prior knowledge of a topic are struggling to understand the texts. Dependence on repeated reading rather than using reading strategies like skimming or summarizing can limit their comprehension abilities. To solve these challenges, teachers should utilize specific vocabulary education, guided reading activities, and interactive discussions that enable students to engage meaningfully with reading. Strengthening these areas will considerably increase students' reading skills and overall academic success.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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