



**AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN READING COMPREHENSION  
AT THE TENTH GRADE MA AL-SHIGHOR**

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**Abstract:**

This study aims to identify and understand the difficulties faced by tenth-grade students at MA AL-SHIGHOR in reading comprehension, as well as the internal and external factors affecting these difficulties. The research method used is descriptive qualitative, with data collection through questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The findings show that students experience difficulties in understanding texts at various levels, including literal, inferential, and critical comprehension. Factors influencing students' reading comprehension difficulties include a lack of vocabulary, sentence structure complexity, lack of reading interest, and an uncondusive learning environment. Based on the conclusions of this study, there is a need for the development of more effective teaching methods to address students' reading difficulties.

**Keywords:** *reading difficulties, text comprehension, internal factors, external factors, teaching strategies.*

**INTRODUCTION**

This research aims to determine the extent of language skills and reading interest among class X English students at MA AL-SHIGHOR. Researchers decided to conduct research at MA

AL-SHIGHOR because the school is under the Islamic Boarding School Foundation, which is based on foreign languages, including English. Therefore, researchers want to examine whether students at MA AL-SHIGHOR experience difficulties in English reading comprehension. Apart from that, this research also aims to identify factors that influence students' reading abilities, both from internal aspects such as motivation and interest and from external aspects such as teaching methods and learning environment.

There are several important elements that must be used to obtain comprehensive and in-depth results such as vocabulary understanding, critical reading skills, reading strategies, inference making skills, and structural understanding.

Language is the most effective communication tool, which makes it important for smooth communication between individuals who use it and those who don't. As said by Prihatini (2020), there are numerous languages spoken globally, and English stands out as a crucial international language. It is extensively used worldwide for communication, making proficiency in English essential for individuals. Learning English requires developing four fundamental skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Reading is a foundation. Reading is a fundamental skill that is closely linked to other language skills, namely speaking, listening, and writing. Reading serves as a window to knowledge, allowing individuals to acquire information through books, magazines, newspapers, and other media. skill that is closely linked to other language skills, namely speaking, listening, and writing. Reading serves as a window to knowledge, allowing individuals to acquire information through books, magazines, newspapers, and other media.

Reading is one of the essential English language skills in everyday life because it allows students to obtain new information and expand their knowledge, as stated by Nurdianingsih (2021). Through reading activities, students can improve their vocabulary and grammar skills, so it is important for teachers to develop reading skills in students as an integral part of the English language learning process.

Reading is an essential component of language skills in every individual's life, both in everyday contexts and in educational environments such as schools or universities. Through reading activities, readers can gain various knowledge contained within texts. Oakhill, J., Cain, K., and Elbro (2015) state that reading comprehension is a complex task that requires the coordination of various cognitive skills and abilities. Reading comprehension is the ability to read a text, analyze it, and understand its content. The habit of reading also helps readers discover new vocabulary and phrases that readers may not have known before. This habit is highly beneficial for developing the ability to acquire new knowledge each time they read.

Reading is defined as a difficult task that requires unique talents, having many similarities with speaking in terms of information processing, as mentioned by Oakhill et al. (2014) reading comprehension is a multifaceted activity that demands the integration of numerous cognitive skills and abilities. Essentially, it involves the capacity to read, process, and grasp the meaning of text. This skill is shaped by an individual's personality and abilities, particularly their skill in drawing conclusions. The process of comprehending text relies on one's personality traits and cognitive skills, especially their capability to infer meaning.

Reading comprehension, as stated by Grabe and Stoller, is the ability to understand information from a text and interpret it accurately according to the text's meaning (Grabe, W., & Stoller, 2019). An individual's ability to comprehend a text is influenced by their nature and skills. Reading comprehension is a crucial skill in language, as it helps people understand what they read. Reading is a serious skill for students because, without reading texts, they cannot

effectively function and succeed in the world, as stated by Lisiana, DS, Yelliza, & Putri (2021), who mention that through reading, students learn many things need and should know.

Through reading, students can expand their English vocabulary. As stated by Maulana (2021), reading comprehension is a process by which readers can discover the true meaning of a text. Harmer argues that reading is very important because it has various benefits. Students gain a wealth of information from various sources through reading, which is beneficial for broadening their knowledge and understanding.

Reading is the process of collecting data from various sources. Since reading is a basic skill for interpreting books, it is also an important language skill that children must learn, as stated by Masduqi (2014), who states that teachers and students must deal with reading regularly as part of academic life. Reading is very important because it fosters critical thinking. Reading is the way English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students absorb knowledge and gather information, so reading can help readers' critical thinking.

The four main media—radio, video, cassettes, and television—can all be used to acquire knowledge or information, as stated by Hung & Ngan (2015), stating that highlighting Reading is an important skill that helps students build vocabulary, fluency, and other abilities. Finally, reading supports their language learning and competence. For example, when learning English, reading is very important for the growth of language learning. Reading English literature will help students develop writing skills, expand vocabulary, and master grammar. Unfortunately, oral knowledge is limited and only temporary because students need to be attentive listeners.

Children still need pens and books to write down their teacher's explanations so can read them later, even though written content is usually more durable and easier to understand. As Ardhian et al. (2020) said, one of the Indonesian language skills that must be developed in schools is reading comprehension. This is because reading comprehension is currently something that children must have because their performance as students is very dependent on their reading skills.

Reading comprehension can be categorized into four distinct levels: literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, critical comprehension, and creative comprehension. Each level requires unique skills to effectively interpret information from a text. The ability to understand information directly in text is known as literal understanding, as stated by Kholiq and Luthfiyati (2020) that higher understanding requires literal understanding as its basis. Meanwhile, the ability to interpret information that is stated indirectly is called inferential understanding, which focuses on responses that are not stated explicitly in the text. The ability to assess and analyze literary material is known as critical understanding, which is often considered the same as evaluative understanding.

The skill of reading comprehension at a comparative level is considered crucial for understanding, whereas expressing emotional and aesthetic reactions to texts that align with specific criteria or subsequent interpretations is referred to as creative comprehension. This form of comprehension encompasses all cognitive elements of reading that pertain to the psychological and aesthetic effects of the text on the reader.

In this skill, students must interpret or analyze sentences to extract implicit and explicit information from the text, enabling them to accurately respond to the questions asked. When it comes to reading comprehension tests, students face various problems depending on their level of mastery. As stated by Laily (2018), reading comprehension will be simple for students who have a large vocabulary, and those who are proficient in grammar will also benefit.

Each student may experience challenges that are different from others, thus requiring a unique teaching approach and learning activities. From the explanation above, fluent mastery of grammar will help students read a text more easily and capture information, as said by Nurdianingsih (2021), by studying English sentence structure, students can maximize their reading skills, allowing them to organize the meaning of each sentence in a text. Since reading should be enjoyable for students, they will feel motivated to engage with the material and will be able to comprehend its meaning.

As per previous researchers' experience, it was found that there was a problem: English is an international language used in every country on the face of the earth, and English classes have become a mandatory requirement in all schools, so English must be taught in every country school, with each level of school having its own level. different difficulties in learning English.

Reading, speaking, listening, and writing are just some of the skills that must be learned in English classes. These four elements are important for students to understand, as stated by Wahyuningsih and Muis (2020), reading is recognized as one of the four key aspects that students encounter, each with varying levels of difficulty. It is highly significant in the teaching and learning process, making a solid comprehension essential. To master reading, students must grasp the content presented in diverse texts, whether are brief or extensive.

Factors affecting student learning encompass both internal and external elements. As stated by Wahyuningsih & Muis (2020), intelligence, an internally influential factor in learning, is a culturally inherited abstraction that helps society recognize performance differences among individuals both within and between social groups. This means that intelligence affects both society and its members. On the other hand, external factors are supportive elements originating from outside the student. As stated by Drs. Slameto (2013), internal factors refer to elements within individuals undergoing learning, including aspects such as intelligence, preparedness, and motivation. On the other hand, external factors pertain to influences that come from outside the individual who is engaging in the learning process, as stated by Yunita and Patriadi (2020), these are categorized into three main areas: family influences, school-related factors, and community aspects.

Observations suggest that students at MA Al-Shighor struggle with drawing conclusions, identifying main ideas, and seeking references in their reading. This observation prompts researchers to explore both internal and external factors contributing to these reading comprehension challenges among tenth-grade students at MA Al-Shighor. Given these issues, there is a keen interest in studying the difficulties students face with reading comprehension at the high school level. Furthermore, by delving into the underlying causes, researchers aim to examine how both internal and external factors affect reading comprehension difficulties among eleventh-grade students at MA Al-Shighor.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research applies a descriptive-qualitative design, in that the qualitative research method is an in-depth approach to understanding phenomena in natural contexts, emphasizing the meaning given by individuals to their experiences. As stated by Creswell (2018), this approach allows researchers to explore the complexity of participants' subjective perspectives, such as speaking anxiety among students. Through the use of techniques such as in-depth interviews and direct observation, qualitative research makes it possible to explore nuances and context that may not be apparent through quantitative methods. Data analysis in qualitative research often involves looking for thematic patterns that emerge from the raw data, which can lead to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Furthermore, as stated by

Creswell (2014), qualitative research is defined as an approach used to explore and understand the meaning of an object, be it an individual, group, or human problem. The collected data, both in written and image form, will be described in the form of descriptions that are appropriate to the phenomena that occur. Thus, this method not only provides information about what happened but also why and how the phenomenon occurred, according to the perspective involved.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the researcher investigated a tenth-grade science class with 22 students. Data were gathered using observation, questionnaires, and interviews. The researcher utilized these methods to gather information about the challenges and internal and external factors affecting the students' comprehension of reading materials at MA AL-SHIGHOR.

### Levels of comprehension in reading

#### Literal Comprehension

The most fundamental level of comprehension is literal understanding, where readers are required to remember or recognize specific facts and details from the text, such as character names and settings. The majority of the information needed for literal comprehension is directly sourced from the text itself. Evaluating this type of comprehension is relatively easy: readers either recall the information or they do not. Literal comprehension is a basic form of understanding, often assessed through questions about who, what, when, and where.

Percentage of Literal Comprehension

No	Literal Comprehension	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	Text is too difficult	18.2	18.2	36.4	27.3
2	Vocabulary is not understood	27.3	18.2	31.8	22.7
3	Inadequate vocabulary	9.1	27.3	45.5	18.2
4	Confusion with words	13.6	50.0	27.3	9.1
5	Identifying main ideas	13.6	40.9	36.4	9.1
6	Finding specific information	0.0	50.0	40.9	9.1

7	Understanding complex sentences	13.6	36.4	31.8	18.2
8	Understanding context	9.1	36.4	36.4	18.2
9	Drawing conclusions	9.1	27.3	36.4	27.3
10	Confidence in understanding	9.1	31.8	40.9	18.2
11	Answering questions	9.1	50.0	22.7	18.2
12	Time to understand	13.6	50.0	27.3	9.1

Based on the above data, it can be concluded that in the X grade, many students find it difficult to understand vocabulary and main ideas in English texts. 27.3% of students admitted not understanding the meaning of words in texts, while 45.5% felt their vocabulary was inadequate to understand texts. This indicates that many students still struggle to recognize and understand basic vocabulary and main ideas in texts. Additionally, 36.4% of students find it difficult to understand complex sentences, and the same percentage find it difficult to understand the context or situations in texts. This indicates that students need more practice in understanding complex sentence structures and reading contexts.

### **Inferential Comprehension**

Inferential comprehension refers to the next level of understanding, where readers are expected to grasp information that is suggested or implied rather than explicitly mentioned in the text. For instance, if a passage describes a character strolling down the street on a cloudy day while carrying an umbrella, one can infer that the character is likely preparing for possible rain. This level of understanding is more intricate than literal comprehension because it requires combining and integrating information from the text with the reader's personal background knowledge.

#### Percentage of Inferential Comprehension

No	Inferential Comprehension	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	Forgot information	0.0	40.9	27.3	31.8

2	Frustration while reading	0.0	45.5	18.2	36.4
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Based on the above data, it can be concluded that in the 10th grade, 36.4% of students find it difficult to draw conclusions from the texts they read. This suggests that students need more practice making inferences and conclusions from readings. Additionally, many students feel frustrated when reading English texts (45.5%) and take a long time to read and understand the texts (50%). This indicates the need for more efficient reading strategies and emotional support for students.

### **Critical Comprehension**

Critical comprehension is the third and highest level in the hierarchy, demanding that readers assess and judge the information presented in a text. This stage involves detailed analysis and critical thinking. Responses to inferential questions are vital and depend heavily on the reader's previous knowledge and interests. Enhancing readers' ability to make inferences and engage in critical thinking is a complex challenge.

Percentage of Critical Comprehension

No	Critical Comprehension	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	Helped by pictures/illustrations	59.1	36.4	4.5	0.0

Based on the above data, it can be concluded that in the 10th grade, most students (59.1%) feel helped by the presence of pictures or illustrations in reading texts. This suggests that visualization can be a very effective tool in aiding comprehension of more complex and abstract texts.

### **DISCUSSION**

This discussion aims to gain a deep understanding of the research findings regarding reading comprehension difficulties experienced by tenth-grade students at MA AL-SHIGHOR. The research findings indicate that many students struggle with understanding vocabulary and main ideas in English texts. According to the questionnaire data, 27.3% of students admitted to not understanding the meanings of words in the text, while 45.5% felt that their vocabulary was inadequate for comprehending the text. This suggests that many students still face difficulties in recognizing and understanding basic vocabulary and main ideas in texts.

Additionally, 36.4% of students find it challenging to understand complex sentences and contextual situations in the text. This indicates that students need more practice understanding complex sentence structures and reading contexts. At the inferential comprehension level, 36.4% of students find it hard to draw conclusions from the texts they read, highlighting the need for more practice in making inferences and conclusions from reading material.

At the critical comprehension level, the majority of students (59.1%) find that images or illustrations in the reading text are helpful. This suggests that visualization can be a very effective tool in aiding comprehension of more complex and abstract texts.

Reading comprehension difficulties are also influenced by internal and external factors. Among internal factors, many students feel frustrated when reading English texts (45.5%) and require a long time to read and understand texts (50%). This indicates the need for more efficient reading strategies and emotional support for students.

From an external factor perspective, the learning environment also affects students' ability to understand reading texts. A significant number of students (40.9%) agree that the learning environment impacts their ability to comprehend reading texts. Additionally, many students (40.9%) feel that they need help from others to understand English reading texts.

Interviews with students revealed that they face various difficulties in understanding English reading texts, reflecting challenges at different levels of reading comprehension. At the literal comprehension level, students often struggle with complex vocabulary and long, complex sentence structures. At the inferential comprehension level, students find it difficult to connect ideas between different paragraphs and understand figurative language or metaphors in the text. At the critical comprehension level, students feel overwhelmed by the volume of text that needs to be read and struggle with critical analysis.

To address these difficulties, students have found various effective methods and strategies. At the literal comprehension level, students use dictionaries to understand difficult words and reread texts multiple times to improve basic comprehension. At the inferential comprehension level, group discussions with peers are very helpful in explaining meanings not explicitly stated in the text. At the critical comprehension level, listening to audio versions of texts helps students understand pronunciation and intonation, which aids in critical analysis.

Thus, the research findings indicate that tenth-grade students at MA AL-SHIGHOR face various difficulties in understanding English reading texts at different levels of reading comprehension. To address these difficulties, a comprehensive approach is needed, including intensive practice, the use of visual aids, and emotional support, as well as a conducive learning environment.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research conducted on the tenth-grade students at MA AL-SHIGHOR, it can be concluded that there are several main difficulties faced by students in understanding English reading texts. These difficulties include limited vocabulary, complex sentence structures, difficulty identifying main ideas, slow reading speed, and difficulty drawing conclusions from texts. Internal factors such as motivation, self-confidence, previous negative experiences, stress, and unsatisfactory learning outcomes also influence students' reading comprehension. External factors such as support from teachers and peers, a conducive learning environment, access to additional learning resources, and innovative teaching methods also play a significant role in students' reading comprehension.

This research shows that a good understanding of vocabulary is essential for improving reading skills, as stated by Creswell (2018) and Miles & Huberman (2019). Additionally, complex sentence structures can hinder text comprehension, and the ability to identify the main ideas is crucial. High intrinsic motivation and self-confidence are major drivers of the effective learning process. Negative experiences in learning English, as well as stress and anxiety, can also create psychological barriers that reduce learning motivation.

Social support from teachers and peers, a supportive learning environment, access to additional learning resources, and the application of innovative teaching methods all have a positive impact on improving students' comprehension of reading texts. A combination of these factors can create a more productive and effective learning environment for students to understand English.

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