INVESTIGATING EFL LEARNERS' READING DIFFICULTIES AND THE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Devi Nurhayati
Institut Pendidikan dan Bahasa Invada
devinurha27@gmail.com

Reno Julyan
Institut Pendidikan dan Bahasa Invada
Renojulian789@gmail.com

Aldha Williyan
Institut Pendidikan dan Bahasa Invada
alwilliyan@gmail.com

Abstract: This study investigates the reading difficulties faced by EFL learners and proposes possible solutions for English Education students in an Indonesian university. Reading comprehension is a vital component of the English education curriculum, as it enables students to comprehend and analyze texts effectively. To conduct this study, a descriptive strategy was employed in combination with a qualitative approach. The questionnaire was designed to identify common challenges encountered by students, including difficulties in text translation, enhancing motivation, and the teaching methods employed by instructors. Data was collected through interview sessions, questionnaire responses, and documentation. The findings revealed that students predominantly struggled with sentence comprehension. By addressing these issues and fostering a desire to read, related challenges such as limited vocabulary, grammar proficiency, and sentence interpretation can be effectively tackled. Moreover, some students faced difficulties arising from inadequate teaching methods employed by their instructors. Consequently, this study concludes that students' reading difficulties primarily revolve around understanding the text itself, which in turn leads to other complications such as grammar mastery, vocabulary limitations, and text translation problems. These factors emerge from both students themselves and the instructional approaches adopted by their teachers.

Keywords: EFL learners, reading comprehension, reading difficulties.

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to investigate EFL learners reading difficulties and the possible solution, the difficulty factors of English Education Students in a university in Indonesia in learning reading subject. Reading is one of the important subjects in English education study program, furthermore the students are able to understand and be able to further analyse a text. However, there are some students who find it difficult to learn and master these subjects because the students are hampered by various obstacles such as having limited vocabulary, lack of understanding in grammar, difficult to focus on sentences that are complex and full of meaning, and how the lecturer conveyed the material, this is the difficulty of students in reading subjects (Nopiyadi et al., 2023). Seven out of ten students have matters to understanding this subject, as experienced by students in a university in Indonesia out of total from 37 there were nine students who did not pass in this subjects. That is the reason why this journal was produced with the aim of solving the difficulty factors in this subject and finding solutions to these matters. The joint process of extracting and constructing the meaning contained in a sentence through communication and participation in written language is called reading comprehension Snow, Septia, Indrawati, Juriana, Rudini, (2022).

One of the matters that arise in learning reading subjects is the difficulty of students to understanding these complex sentences, such as passive sentences, compound sentences, and clauses. While comprehension of reading affects the entire text, whereas compound sentences and clauses are couple sentences that consist of a combination from single sentences. In reading text the sentences that are arranged are usually not in simple form, regularly consists of a subject, predicate, and an object (Asipi et al., 2022). Often there are many additional words such as clauses, adverbs, and adjectives to add information in this sentence. In passive sentences there is a logic twist where the subject of the active sentence becomes the object of the passive sentences and contrary. There are differences in the structure of passive sentences with active sentence, separateness in structure, addition words, and clauses. This is what makes it difficult for students to catch the meaning of essence of the sentence Lubis, Irmayana, Nurbaidah (2019).

If in learning reading but we cannot improve the reading skill itself, several factors regularly often occur such as mispronouncing, changing places, rushing when reading, mistakes in recognizing words, etc. Some of these things can change the way students view the subject reading. Sometimes because of the difficulty of understanding the meaning in a text, we as students, there are several students who choose not to answer the text correctly, end up getting a low score. That's the importance of why we have to hone and improve reading skills, by knowing where the difficulty lies, we can overcome it by finding the right solution. conveyed by the text so that we can save more time. Reading skills will increase on a scale along with the extent to which we are able to understand the material we absorb (Asipi et al., 2022). By honing reading skills and improving them, we will easily be able to overcome some of the difficulties we experience in learning reading, as well as minimizing the possibility of getting low scores.

Several research of reading difficulties factors have been carried out by server previous studies. The first is research by Natsir, & Anisati, (2016) entitled "The Matters in Teaching Reading Comprehension to EFL Students" The purpose of the research to find out certified English

teachers in their efforts to teach reading which is considered a learning success. In the research that is used, descriptive qualitative research is an option in the research that is made. The results of the study were revealed in an interview, that the teacher played an important role in helping students achieve reading competence by utilizing the conditions of the learning environment.to find out certified English teachers in their efforts to teach reading which is considered a learning success. In the research that is used, descriptive qualitative research is an option in the research that is made. The results of the study were revealed in an interview, that the teacher played an important role in helping students achieve reading competence by utilizing the conditions of the learning environment.

The second is research by Lestari, Muljanto, Hamzah, (2020) entitled "An Analysis of Students Difficulties in Reading Comprehension" The purpose of this study was to determine the difficulties faced by students of SMA Negeri in Garut in Reading Comprehension and the strategies used. This research uses qualitative by applying descriptive analysis in it. The results of this study that the most frequently encountered difficulties students are reading comprehension of Vocabulary II, thus causing difficult word meaning, the strategy used is monitoring comprehension. The purpose of this study was to determine the difficulties faced by students of SMA Negeri in Garut in Reading Comprehension and the strategies used. This research uses qualitative by applying descriptive analysis in it. The results of this study that the most frequently encountered difficulties students are reading comprehension of Vocabulary II, thus causing difficult word meaning, the strategy used is monitoring comprehension.

The third is research by Septia, Indrawati, Juriana, Rudini, (2022) entitled "An Analysis of Students Difficulties in Reading Comprehension" The purpose of this study was to determine the difficulties of public high school students in Bangka and the factors that caused them to have difficulty in learning to read English comprehension texts. This study uses qualitative descriptive in determining the results to be achieved. The results of this study obtained 3 factors, including: (1) students did not have interest in learning and reading English texts, (2) Difficulty reading and translating English texts, (3) lack of facilities available at school in terms of reading for them.

The Fourth is research by Satriani, (2018) entitled "Reading Comprehension Difficulties Encountered by English Students of Universitas Islam Riau" The purpose of the study was to determine the difficulties faced by semester 1 students at FKIP UIR Pekanbaru in reading comprehension. This study uses qualitative in the nature of a case study with the instruments used are questionnaires and interview guidelines. This study resulted that most of the difficulties faced by students came from motivation in reading habits, students read little or not at all. The difficulties faced by students come from sentences of reading texts that are too long with complex sentences. Seeing from these problems, new vocabulary and long texts are the main obstacles to understanding a reading text.

The Fifth is research by Meylana, (2019) entitled "students reading comprehension ability and problems in an advanced reading comprehension class" The purpose of the study was to determine the ability of students of the English Department in reading comprehension for advanced classes, the factors that affect the ability of students to create a gap between students with good

and bad reading. This study applies a qualitative descriptive in determining the results, applying the theory of Improving Reading Characteristics from Anderson et al. (1985). The results in this study led to several differences from students in terms of understanding high and low level abilities in reading.

Factors difficulties in reading subject is possible happen in EFL Learners, based on the discussion from the previous studies study above, the study which focused in reading comprehension difficulties, this research will analyse difficulties factors for the reason why the students get lowest scores. In addition to exploring reading difficulties, this study also discusses about finding the possible solution to every kind of matters that encountered in this subject.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher combined a descriptive strategy with a qualitative approach in this study, following Williyan (2019). Because there was no treatment given to the students in this research, a description design was used. Description is a meant to collect true information pertaining to the current situation of phenomenon, Yuhana (2013). Sugiono (2010) mentioned that qualitative research method is a research method used to investigate the condition of natural object. It means that the usage of pupils challenges in comprehending reading texts were merely described as what they were, without giving any therapy. Because only analysis based on the discovered facts was done in this study, the researcher mainly focused on describing data on students reading comprehension challenges. In Creswell, Imandari, Suhartono, Wijaya (2015), "To explore this issue from the perspective of distance education students." Therefore, the writer reached a qualitative research in which the writer collected data, examined it, and came to a conclusion to describe what the difficulties of English education students in a university in Indonesia reading subject were so that they got low scores. The population for this study was made up of 37 third-semester students from the Department of English Education in a university in Indonesia for the 2021–2022 academic year.

The sample is taken for the exam on November 19, 2022, using a purposive sampling technique. After attending English classes, to collect the data the researcher conducted an interview and open a questionnaire online with some students as the object. Data collection begins with interviewing research objects by providing prepared questions, the researcher will use notes and voice recordings during the interview to make it easier for the researchers to write the results of the data that has been collected. When the interview session was over and the required data is complete. The students will be given a questionnaire to reveal any difficulties experienced in learning reading and the solutions made. The questionnaire was conducted online using Google Form in January 2023, students are asked to access the google form via the link that researchers already shared then required to response several questions in the form of multiple choice and essays that have been provided. The questionnaire asks about some of the problems that are often encountered, such as difficulties in translating text, how to increase motivation, and teacher's way of teaching in class. Therefore, in collecting data in this study such as through interview sessions, questionnaire sessions, and documentation. Furthermore, the collected data analysed using the descriptive analysis technique.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The difficulties occurred by students on reading are found in two aspects. They are linguistics and non-linguistics. The result of the questionnaire in done to find and explore the difficulties in two aspects of reading to seven students in classroom.

Reading Difficulties Experienced by the Students

This section presented the problems most often faced by students when learning reading in class. The questionnaire will be displayed in the form of the aspects, percentages, and mean. The researchers will be describing based on the data below the table as explained above,

Table 1. Linguistics Problems in Reading

The Problems	Percentage			
	Totally Agree	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**
Students' have problem in tenses	15,7%	55,6%	21,5%	7,2%
Students' have difficulties in mastering new vocabulary	3,2%	76,4%	15,8%	4,6%
Students' difficulty in understanding compound Sentence	16,7%	52,3%	5,6%	25,5%
Students' have limitation in the Lack of knowledge(Lexical Problem)	27,8%	63,8%	5,6%	2,9%

Based on the results of the questionnaire, the difficulty in learning reading that is often faced by students is skills in new vocabulary as seen from the most approved percentage with a point of 76,4%, while the Lack of knowledge (Lexical Problem) in 63,8%, and tenses is quite influential 55,6% and last, half of students agree that difficulties in compound sentence also have an effect on students with a percentage of 52,3%. To the question *"Tenses affect reading?"*. 55,6%% answered "agree", 15,7% "totally agree", 21,5% "neutral", and only 7,2% answered "disagree".

Which means half of the students have difficulty reading a text in detail and cannot fully understand the meaning in it because of grammar, some may also lose interest due to this lack of understanding. The answer to the next question *"recognizing new influential vocabulary in reading?"*. Related to this point 63,8% answered "agree", 3,2% answered "totally agree", and 15,8% answered "neutral", 4,6% to disagree. This shows that the majority of students validly experience the same problem in terms of vocabulary limitations.

The third question *"understanding compound sentence is influential in reading?"*, indicated most of students have problems in it as follows 52,3% "agree", 16,7% "totally agree", 25,5% "neutral", and 5,6% students answered "disagree". Compound a crucial function in reading, it is frequently written or placed in the wrong sequence. Compound can be used to show the connection between the ideas expressed in a clause and the ideas expressed in the remaining parts of a sentence. Compound are also known as words that connect words, statements, and sentences. It is a word that connects phrases, sometimes even sentences. The relationship between words, sentences, clauses, and phrases that join with a textual sequence and signals that also function as compound in sentences is unquestionably argued. Dewi, (2019). The percentage to the last point with question *"lack of understanding of Knowledge also has an effect?"*. 66,7% answered "agree", 27,8% also answered "totally agree", and last 5,6% for "neutral", and 2,9% "disagree". One of the other reasons from the linguistic aspect which is very influential in how students understand reading in learning is lack of understanding of the material also has an effect. Lexical problems pertain to the meaning of lexical words and involve ignorance of word classes and their derivations. It is corroborated by some studies that has already shown a substantial correlation between lexical knowledge and readers comprehension of what they read. Frestisia, Ratnamanida, (2020).

Table 2. Non Linguistics Problems in Reading

The Problems	Percentage			
	Totally Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Students' difficulty in differentiate main & supporting ideas	18,7%	45,5%	27,3%	9,1%
The influence of speed reading	4,3%	20,2%	27,3%	48,2%
Students' problems in Working memory	18,2%	63,3%	18,2%	

The effect of Teacher's ways in teaching	54,5%	45,5%		

Above the table of non-linguistic problems reveals point one *difficulty to differentiate main & supporting ideas* 45,5% answered for agree, 18,7% totally agree, and 27,3% for neutral. Which means the response from half of the students had difficulty distinguishing main ideas and supporting ideas, some students only knew about the main ideas which were located at the beginning of the sentence or at the end of the sentence. For those who responded disagree with total of 9,1% it can be concluded that students are good enough in understanding the difference between main and supporting ideas. Point two shows with the result of the questionnaire the most points with total of 48,2% of students answered disagree, neutral 27,3% prove if *reading skills in reading subject* do not really affect students in understanding the material. because the most important part is that students do not need to read text quickly to be able to find meaning in sentences.

But not all students disagree with this statement because some answered agree with percentage of 20,2% and strongly agree 4,3%. Students agree that speed in reading had an effect because when students were asked by the teacher to read a text clearly, some experienced problems with vocabulary which made it difficult for students to pronounce a word, as a result they stammered and students felt they were not optimal in explaining the text. Majority of students faced as point three unanimously answered agree with percentage 63,3% and 18,2% answered strongly agree about *working memory problem*. Its indicated that this factor has an effect especially on remembering new vocabulary where students find it when reading a long text with standard English in a sentence which usually occurs during a test, this limitation makes students answer randomly. And those who answered neutral with points 18,2% is a student who has a much stronger memory compared to other students in the class. Last point is the most influential and some problems may occur because this thing. Questionnaire for the last statement all students who were participants answered 45,5% agree and 54,5% totally agree, *the teacher's ways in teaching* is the most decisive things for students and teacher where success in conveying and understanding the material is questioned.

It could be noted students mostly had problems in understanding meaning the sentences. By providing solutions to increase the desire to read, other factors will also be resolved properly, such as limited vocabulary, lack of mastery grammar, and difficulties in understanding the meaning of sentences. And few other of student experience problems from the way the teacher teaches in class. Incompatibility in the method that the teacher uses and how students capture and understand the material is a sensitive thing that very easily reduces learning motivation. It is very important to pay attention to the difficulties in learning to read and the strategies that must be done to overcome them because this determines success in learning and teaching both for students and teachers.

The Possible Solutions for the Reading Difficulties
Teachers Can Use Interesting Learning Media

Instead of giving practice questions and giving orders to answer in every meeting in class by only looking at the full text which is a lot and seems to make students feel bored faster when learning in reading. To attract students' attention more, teacher can explore teaching methods by inserting several pictures in each paragraph in the text with the aim of supporting the imagination of students when reading it. On the other hand, the teacher can provide a story text that is familiar to students such as folk tales, some stories that have been adapted into films like Harry Potter, Moby Dick, etc. That way students can catch the material more quickly, by choosing texts that are easier to understand, students will be able to master the material more efficiently and increase motivation.

Improve Some Skills in Reading

Some basic skills in learning reading that need to be improved such as, Grammar, that is an important aspect because its things supporting the comprehension of the text. Knowledge of grammar is important in comprehension because complexity of grammar can cause difficulty. Comprehending the grammar rules and the difficulties in reading is the most problem appear in learning english. In reading comprehension students often find it difficult even to understand the reading, such as cannot have understood the main idea of the text itself, this is happening because students lack of grammar mastery, Negara, (2016). when the grammar in a text is well structured, the clearer the message, the more likelihood the reader to understand the meaning contained the text. For instance, in comprehending reading text, having a good sentences and structure that connects one idea to another component in details so that it makes it easier for the reader to understand the text, that is the reason grammar is an important foundation in a language, Istikomah, Nurhayati, AF, (2021). Vocabularies is an important thing both in reading or communication. Students will not understand the text if they do not have vocabulary, students should be master as many as possible vocabularies. This is one of the difficult subjects and students have problems in mastery this vocabulary because it have skills includes some aspects, such as spelling, meaning, pronounciation, etc. Andriani, Sriwahyuningsih, (2019). By reading and understanding the meaning of each word through everyday experience this can improve a vocabulary mastery, because vocabulary is an important component in reading comprehension, Lee (2017).

Teachers Can Change the Way of Teaching

Strategies such as developing vocabulary for students, to continue reading together with understanding the material, focus on the main point of a material using contextual clues, the teacher can also invite students to visualize what they have to read and be able to identify text and some assignments. Teachers are free to use any technique effectively, each of it must be based on an understanding of the principles and assumptions. There is certainly no shortage of descriptions or labels for activities that maybe classified as pertaining to instruction. The teacher can use many strategies in teaching reading such as applying various methods, media, and games in order to keep the students interested and enjoy in class. Because teacher lead the students in the class to become

a successful reader, teacher must find out various strategies in order to increase the quality of teaching and learning process. Successful teachers are flexible and can use variety of teaching techniques, they can implement it and adapt them to the learning styles of each student in the classroom, Dwiningtiyas, Sofyan, Puspita, (2020).

Teacher Can Provide Motivation and Feedback

When the teacher gives tasks that students think are difficult, such as analysing reading texts where students put more effort because they have to read the entire text and understanding the meaning in it, students will feel enthusiastic when tasks that they think difficult but is successfully completed then the teacher can appreciate it properly. Not only giving orders to students to collect assignments without the teacher checking and correcting them correctly.

Based on the interview two main points were noted: students' problems, and student solutions.

Students' Problems in Learning Reading

The interviews with the students from the data that has been obtained which focuses finding problems related to their reading difficulties. Based on the information obtained, several factors cause students to experience difficulties in learning reading were identified. Two factors were found: external and internal factors. External factors include problems from the outside that students experience. From interviews conducted by researchers the factors that most influenced students in learning reading, and the problem was due to the lack of appreciation from the teacher and their teaching method which was monotonous and the students felt lost interest. Internal factors include consequences of the external factors itself, losing interest causes students to find it difficult to learning reading because a loss of motivation that encourages students to continue learning.

In the followings, the researchers describe the results of the interviews with students about the problems that hinder the difficulty in learning reading English, particularly related to external factors. Most of nuisance in this case were the lack of motivation or lack of interest of students, thus students were less interested in learning reading. A student's high interest or interest in learning reading could make it easier for them to understand the lesson. Interest is a persistent tendency to pay attention to and remember some activities, Rosalina (2018). High interest is influential in learning, students will find it difficult to get used to reading because lack of motivation and low interest. Students will not able to study well and easily felt bored and tend to get tired, whether students are interested in learning reading, it will be more easier. Seven of students who were interviewed about their opinions in learning reading they were attending responded that learning reading is difficult to and impressively boring. Such an activity, absolutely can reduce motivation to learn reading. Based on their statement, they felt they were not enthusiastic to learn reading. The willingness of the students to read texts and understand the meaning of course will decrease. The question that researchers asked was adapted from Puspitaloka N, Hayati H. A, (2022). "What do you think about learning reading in class?". They answered:

S1: *"Sulit dipelajari"* (hard to learn)
S2: *"Kurang efisien"* (less efficient)
S3: *"Kurang efektif"* (less effective)
S4: *"Kurang efektif"* (less effective)   S5: *"Sulit dipahami"* (hard to understand)

On the other hand, two of student said learning reading was quite interesting and found it quite effective.

S6: *"Menarik"* (interesting)
S7: *"Menarik"* (interesting).

The external factors include condition of the way the teacher teaches, major factors were identified: the method used by the teacher when teaching reading in class, which ultimately has an impact students find it difficult to learn reading. The teaching method is a strategy or method used and as a result the learning objectives can be achieved. Teachers absolutely has a different character or personality and this relates to how they teach in class. Learning methods are used to convey learning objectives to students who have a variety of characters. Based on the result of the interviews, it seems the teacher who teaches the reading subject uses a method that is quite monotonous and makes students pay less attention and motivation to focus less. Students find it difficult and hard to understand about sentences because they lose interest in learning. It was found that the students encountered difficulty to understand English sentences due to poor grammar mastery, difficulty in understanding of grammar, lack of reading strategy, also difficulties in translating the meaning of each sentences. To the question "What are the difficulties that you experience while learning reading?". They replied:

S1: *"Belum mampu untuk menguasai materi"* (lack of mastery of the material)
S2: *"Kesulitan dalam mengetahui arti"* (difficulty in knowing the meaning)
S3: *"Kurang menguasai kosakata"* (lack of vocabulary)
S4: *"Kurang menguasai kosakata"* (lack of mastery the vocabulary)
S5: *"Kurang menguasai kosakata"* (lack of mastery the vocabulary)
S6: *"Arti yang sulit dipahami"* (hard to understand the meaning)
S7: *"Kesulitan dalam mengetahui arti"* (difficulty in knowing the meaning).

Student's Ways to solve reading difficulties

The result of direct interviews conducted by researchers with students were obtained that several attempts were made to overcome difficulties in reading. For instance, students find it difficult to understand a sentences or find unfamiliar vocabulary, they look for answers by searching google, watching videos, and practicing their reading skills. To the question "How do you try to find out how to solve the problem in reading?". The students replied:

S1: "Berlatih lebih giat" (practice harder)
S2: "Menonton video melalui Youtube" (by watching videos on Youtube)
S3: "Mencari tahu melalui Google" (searching on Google)

S4: "Belajar dengan lebih fokus" (study with more focus)
S5: "Bertanya ke teman dan dosen" (ask to friend and lecturer/teacher)
S6: "Mengimprove kemampuan dalam membaca" (improve the ability to read)
S7: "Menonton video melalui Youtube" (by watching videos on Youtube)

Various efforts that are intended to overcome students' difficulties in reading, actually have not fully overcome the existing problems because there are still many students who still find it difficult in learning reading.

Students' Problems in Learning Reading

Build upon the data, the difficulty in reading that occurred to students were due of two main factors, internal and external factors. Motivation to understand sentences decreased which cause students difficulties in learning reading. Students' lack of motivation was one of the internal factors which makes it hard in learning. The other factor that caused the students felt unmotivated and low interest was come from the teacher's poor teaching method. This external factors give affects students' perspectives about reading, depends on how the teacher coveys the material and attracts students' learning interest.

Student's Ways to solve reading difficulties

The researchers found that in dealing with reading difficulties such as translating the sentences, lack of vocabulary, and identifying texts. students try to find through the internet, watching the videos, practice their skills in reading, and ask to friends and the teacher, these difficulties support in affects students' reading difficulties. And another factor that students should try they can ask to make a deal with the teacher direct the students and changed reading more fun and interesting suppose that the teacher can be more creative and innovative in finding learning methods that can adapt the character of students in the class.

CONCLUSION

From this study, it can be concluded that students' problems when learning reading are matters in understanding the text itself. From this one problem then branched into several such as, lack of mastery grammar, vocabulary limitations, and difficulties in translating the text, etc (Nopiyadi et al., 2023). Low motivation and little interest also is the main problem why students find it difficult in learning reading comprehension. These factors are the main problems that arise from the students itself and from the teacher who provide teaching methods that do not build student learning motivation.

The solutions used by students to overcome the problem of learning methods that are less attractive by read more often than vocabulary will increase, trying to do practice questions, changing teacher's method of teaching in class, searching for the answer through internet, besides that students are looking for other information by asking to classmates and the teacher, by using this methods students can be better prepared in overcoming matters in learning reading comprehension.

This study only involved small participants, which were carried in one college, however the students should continue to practice harder to improve reading skills and build motivation as high as possible.

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