

## MICRO AND MACRO SKILLS OF READING COMPREHENSION ACQUIRED BY EFL STUDENTS

Ida Bagus Nyoman Mantra<sup>1</sup> Ida Ayu Made Sri Widiastuti<sup>2</sup>, Anak Agung Istri  
Yudhi Pramawati<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Jalan Kamboja 11A, Denpasar, Bali,  
Indonesia. E-mail. bagusmantra@unmas.ac.id

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Jalan Kamboja 11A, Denpasar, Bali,  
Indonesia. E-mail. idaayuwidia@unmas.ac.id

<sup>3</sup>Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Jalan Kamboja 11A, Denpasar, Bali,  
Indonesia. E-mail. agunkprama@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension is a very important language skill to support our life in many aspects. In education sectors, reading comprehension is an ability for the students to continually develop their skills in various subjects. Consequently, assessment of students' reading comprehension is absolutely essential to be conducted to systematically collect information and making inferences about the ability of a student or the quality of the learning process. This study revealed that students' reading comprehension is at a sufficient level and students still experienced some challenges in reading comprehension. This study implies that more intensive reading comprehension activities should be carried out and better learning strategies should be employed by the teachers in teaching reading comprehension.

Keywords: Micro Skill, Macro Skill, Reading Comprehension, Students

### I. INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is one language skill that has been known as a very important skill to be mastered by all students because it has very advantageous benefits for the students to enrich their understandings of various knowledge available in printed sources. Reading is not merely intended to develop students' academic knowledge but it enables students to have enjoyment and happiness through reading for pleasures. Extensively reading for pleasure is one source of happiness, excitement, and relaxation for many people (Klingner, Vaughn, Boardman, 2007). Therefore, to enable students to have such an important skill, they have to master both micro and macro skills of reading. The reading comprehension skills are really important for the students in Indonesia because English is still considered as a foreign language. Reading comprehension in English as a foreign language (EFL) is not an easy thing for the Indonesian to do because they have a very limited practice and exposures.

According to Brown (2004), micro-skills in reading comprehension are as the following: (1) discrimination between graphemes and typical English orthographic patterns, (2) store pieces of the language of different lengths in short-term memory, (3) process writing with efficient speed to meet objectives, (4) get

to know the core words, and interpret word order patterns and their significance, (5) recognize grammatical words of class nouns, verbs, etc., Systems, for example, tense, agreement, pluralization, patterns, rules, and elliptical shapes, (6) know that certain meanings can be expressed in different forms of grammar, (7) get to know the cohesive tool in written discourse and its role in signaling the relationship between and between clauses.

Moreover Brown (2004) describe that macro skills in reading comprehension are as follows: (1) recognizing the rhetorical form of written discourse and their importance for interpretation, (2) recognize the communicative function of the written text, according to its form and purpose, (3) give an explicit context using background knowledge, (4) from the events described, ideas, etc., conclude relationships and connections between events, deduce causes and effects, and detect relationships such as main ideas, supporting ideas, new information, the information provided, generalizations, and examples, (5) distinguish between the literal and implied meanings, (6) detect specific cultural references and interpret them in the context of an appropriate cultural scheme, (7) develop and use a series of reading strategies, such as scanning and skimming, detecting discourse markers, guessing the meaning of words from context, and activating schemes for text interpretation.

In a broad sense, micro-skills of reading comprehension include the understanding of micro components of language such as phoneme, morpheme, syllables, words, and phrases, and sentences. Meanwhile, macro skills include more major skills of reading which include getting specific information, general information, textual meaning, textual references and even understanding beyond textual meaning (Mantra, & Widiastuti, 2019). Moreover, students should have the ability to automatically operate reading strategies in understanding the reading text. Reading strategies which should be comprehensively mastered and having the ability to use them efficiently includes top-down and bottom-up processing (Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008).

Top-down processing is a process of reading to understand the meaning and the content of a text by utilizing general information of the text and then going to understand more specific parts of the text. This process may include understanding the topic of the text and understanding the title and the topic of the paragraph, then sentences and words in the text. Meanwhile, bottom-up processing is a process of reading comprehension to comprehend the meaning of smaller chunks of language towards the bigger parts. This includes understanding every single word of the text and then understanding the whole meaning and content of the text. Through having the ability to make use of these reading strategies, enables students to completely comprehend the meaning and content of the text (Nation, 2009).

Additionally, teachers should become more professional in teaching and conducting their teaching duties by making proper lesson plans, carrying out the learning process, and also conducting appropriate assessments (Rennie, 2011). In teaching reading comprehension, teachers should aware that reading consists of two related processes: word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to the process of perceiving how written. Meanwhile, comprehension is the

process of making sense of words, sentences, and connected text. Moreover, reading is generally described as involving two skills decoding and comprehension. Decoding is an isolable ability, which can be taught and assessed in straightforward ways. Comprehension is a complex skill that depends on a variety of factors, contexts, and reading goals. Having comprehension ability, the students can make sense of what the texts tell about and the purpose is the students understand the written language (Alderson, 2005).

Reading is the process of recognition or interpretation of written materials and it deals with the language form (Stricklin, 2011). It involves the recognition of letters, words, phrases, and clauses, and in some respects, it can be considered a simpler process than comprehension. Comprehension, on the other hand, is a process of negotiating between the reader and the writer. It is a more complex psychological process and includes linguistic factors, such as phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic elements, in addition to cognitive and emotional factors. The reader receives information from the author via the words, sentence, and so forth, and tries to understand the inner feelings of the writer (Sweet, & Snow, 2003).

Reading helps in mental development and is known to stimulate the muscles of the eyes. Reading is an activity that involves greater levels of concentration and adds to the conversational skill of the readers. Moreover, the habit of reading also helps readers to understand new words and phrases that they come across in everyday life (Stricklin, 2011; Wang, 2006). Since reading comprehension involves many mental and physical activities, this also indicates that there some difficulties encountered by students in reading comprehension which may burdon their process of understanding (Woolley, 2008).

The description above indicated that reading comprehension is a very complicated process and students need high ability in using various reading strategies. Therefore, based on the phenomenon described above, it is considered to be important to establish the real existing ability of the students' reading comprehension. The findings of this study are considered to be beneficial for the students and the teachers in creating a more intensive and conducive learning environment in reading classes to attain a higher level of reading comprehension and develop the ability to understand a wider range of reading texts for various purposes.

## II. METHODS

Research is a way of finding answers to questions used to discover new information or prove scientific theories. This research dealt with assessing students' writing ability. The researcher made use of an Ex Post Facto Research Design. This type of research design is a systematic empirical inquiry in which the research does not have direct control or manipulation of the independent variable because their manifestation has already been taken place. The designation of ex post facto indicates that ex post facto research is conducted after variation in the variable of interest has already been determined in the natural course of events (Cohen, e t al.,

2005). The ex post facto design is used for measuring and compatible to use in assessing students' reading comprehension.

An ex post facto research is a method that can also be used instead of an experiment, to test hypotheses about cause and effect in the situations where it is unethical to control or manipulate the dependent variable. Ex post facto research is particularly appropriate when simple cause and effect relationships are being explored. An ex post facto study or non-experimental study is a specific investigation in which the researcher cannot directly control and manipulate; the researcher investigates variables through giving certain treatments or randomly creating a certain condition. In ex post facto research, the researcher takes the effect and examines the data retrospectively to establish causes, relationships or associations, and meanings.

The present study used the ex post facto research design because writing ability as the research variable has already taken place prior to the understanding of this study. Students in this study have learned reading comprehension, and they have attended different tests to assess their ability in writing. Although there are many disadvantages of ex post facto design, it nevertheless is frequently the only method by which educational researches can obtain necessary information about characteristics of defined groups of the students or information needed for the intelligent formulation of programs. The researcher cannot manipulate the data of the study because the researcher does not have direct control of the independent variable. The collected data is comprehensively analyzed and descriptively presented to establish valid and reliable findings.

### III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The resent study was ex-post facto research with descriptive analysis which dealt with analyzing the reading comprehension of the EFL students through short answer questions. The purpose of the study was to figure out the achievement of the students in reading comprehension by administering research in front of short answer questions.

Before collecting the data, the researcher previously chose 40 samples by using simple random sampling with a lottery system from the 250 population. After getting the samples, the research researched by administering short answer tasks as the research instrument to the samples. There were 8 texts with 5 questions in each text and the sample had to answer 40 short answer questions in 60 minutes in complete and grammatical sentences. Furthermore, the samples did not allow the use of the dictionary and discuss the answer to other students.

In the current study, the obtained data showed the students' achievement in reading comprehension. The data were analyzed by using the norm-referenced measurement of five standard values showing excellent, good, sufficient, insufficient, and poor achievement in reading comprehension before the scores could be formulated by using the norm reference of five standard values. The data showed the range scores which could be stated as excellent, good, sufficient,

insufficient, and poor achievement. The result of the data analysis showed that the score was  $\geq 3.74$  for excellent achievement (A);  $\geq 3.04 < 3.74$  for good achievement (B);  $\geq 2.34 < 3.04$  for sufficient achievement (C);  $\geq 1.64 < 2.34$  for insufficient achievement (D);  $\leq 1.64$  for poor achievement (E). Furthermore, the scores were arranged based on the result of the analysis.

The converted scores clearly showed that 1 from the 40 samples got excellent achievement; 13 samples, good achievement; 15 samples sufficient achievement, 6 samples, insufficient achievement; and 5 samples got the poor achievement. Furthermore, the findings were calculated in the form of percentages. The percentages were obtained by counting up the total of each converted score and it was divided by the total numbers of the samples. The percentage as the result of the test could be summed up in the following tabulation:

#### The Summary of the Finding

No	Standard Score		Total Samples	Percentage
1	$\geq 3.72$	Excellent Achievement	1	2.5%
2	$\geq 3.03 < 3.72$	Good Achievement	13	32.5%
3	$\geq 2.33 < 3.03$	Sufficient Achievement	15	37.5%
4	$\geq 1.64 < 2.33$	Insufficient Achievement	6	15%
5	$\leq 1.64$	Poor Achievement	5	12.5%
				100%

The findings of the present study were in the form of converted scores based on the norm-referenced measure of five standard values which showed the degree of reading comprehension through short answer questions. The findings pointed out that there were 2.5% of the samples who achieved excellent achievement; 32.5% of the samples got a good achievement, 37.5% of the samples, sufficient achievement; 15% of the samples got insufficient, and 12.5% of the samples got the poor achievement. The results of those calculated percentages summarized that 72.5% or 29 samples were considered successful or could pass the assessment but 27.5% or 11 samples were considered unsuccessful or failed in passing the reading comprehension test.

The researcher found that were 72.5% or 29 samples under study which were considered successful in achieving excellent, good, and sufficient achievement. The researcher found that the students who showed good achievement could answer the question correctly using a complete sentence with few mistakes on their grammatical structure and able to answer the questions about general information, textual meaning, and textual reference. However, their ability in answering a question about specific information was still poor. Moreover, the researcher, unfortunately, found that some of the samples still had a lack of the

ability in using complete and correct grammatical sentences. Their answers were correct, but they could not answer in a complete sentence. It seemed that they were lack of practice in answering the question by using complete and correct grammatical sentences; therefore, they might not be able to write complete sentences incorrect grammatical forms.

Meanwhile, 27.5% or 11 samples were considered unsuccessful in comprehending the reading text well. The students who showed poor achievement could not answer the questions in complete sentences using correct grammatical structures. It seemed that they were a lack of comprehension and constructing the correct grammatical answer. The researcher analyzed that the failure of these samples was due to a lack of ability in finding specific information, textual reference, and textual meaning. They also could not find the answers from the text. They only wrote a few numbers of answers on their answer sheet. It might be caused by a lack of vocabulary mastery because the samples were not allowed use to dictionaries during the test. Automatically, if they found the new words, they did not know the meaning of the word.

According to the finding that both the successful and unsuccessful samples were still had a lack of ability in answering the questions by using complete and correct grammatical sentences, most of the samples still found it difficult to identify specific information in the texts. As a result, the researcher assumed that learning to identify specific information in reading text and writing sentences incorrect grammar might need to be more emphasized by the English teacher in the class. The findings of the study showed that students still had weaknesses of both micro and macro skills in reading comprehension.

More specifically, students experienced difficulty in mastering the skills in reading comprehension as follows: Firstly, micro-skills for reading comprehension are (1) discriminate among the distinctive graphemes and orthographic patterns of English, (2) retain chunks of the language of different lengths in short-term memory, (3) process writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose, (4) recognize a core of words, and interpret word order patterns and their significance, (5) recognize grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization) patterns, rules, and elliptical forms, (6) recognize that a particular meaning may be expressed in different grammatical forms, and (7) recognize cohesive devices in written discourse and their role in signaling the relationship between and among clauses.

Secondly, students were also need to improve their macro-reading skills as follows: (1) recognize the rhetorical forms of written discourse and their significance for interpretation, (2) recognize the communicative functions of written texts, according to form and purpose, (3) infer context that is not explicit by using background knowledge, (4) from described events, ideas, etc., infer links and connections between events, deduce causes and effects, and detect such relations as the main idea, supporting the idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification, (5) distinguish between literal and implied meanings, (6) detect culturally specific references and interpret them in a context of the appropriate cultural schemata, and (7) develop and use a battery of reading

strategies, such as scanning and skimming, detecting discourse markers, guessing the meaning of words from context, and activating schemata for the interpretation of texts.

The finding of the study clearly indicated that serious efforts should be carried out by the teachers in reading comprehension classes in order that the students' skills in reading comprehension can develop further and eventually the students become effective readers and they can easily comprehend reading the texts. Through serious learning process, the students' reading skills may improve and reading becomes an enjoyable activity.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In general, these findings could conclude that the application of short answer questions to assess the students reading comprehension was categorized to be successful. It could be remarked as a sufficient achievement. It meant that after the task the samples had good ability in finding general information, specific information, textual meaning, and reference meaning. English teachers are suggested to be more creative and innovative in teaching English reading comprehension. The teacher should create a good situation in the class, and use creative tools and methods; therefore, the students' may enjoy the material given by the teachers. These findings suggest that most of the students found difficulty in finding the specific information, textual meaning, and textual references. This is actually caused by their lackness in reading comprehension skills both micro and macro skills. Therefore, it is expected that English teachers can make use of the findings of this study as further guidance for better teaching-learning activities.

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