



A STUDY ON ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS' READING BARRIERS AT ENGLISH DEPARTMENT UNP

Ade Mariani¹, Fitrawati²

English Department

Faculty of Languages and Arts

State University of Padang

email: ademariani86@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aimed to find out students reading barriers at English Department UNP. This research was done through descriptive qualitative method with 212 populations. The samples of this study were 63 students chosen by using random sampling techniques. The data were collected through questionnaire adapted from Thong and Hao (2017). The findings of this research indicate that in language factors the most barriers chosen by students is cultural background with percentage score 66,48% included as a high category, then, discourse included in average category with 50,63 of the total percentage score of barrier that chosen by students. Moreover, in the non-language factor the psychological is the most barrier mostly chosen by the students that has the highest percentage score with 73,46% included in high category, next, the indicator that is rarely chosen is reading habit with 59,56% of the total barriers which means it included in average criteria.

Key words: reading, reading barriers, factor in reading barriers

A. INTRODUCTION

For English students, reading skill is one of the basic skills that must be mastered. As we know, there are four essential skills in learning English such as listening, writing, reading and speaking. Those four skills cannot be separated in learning English. Additionally, Patel and Jain (2008) stated that reading skill is one of important tool for academic success and it is very necessary to widen the mind and understand the knowledge.

In learning reading, English students in English Department UNP have to take some reading courses continually. The courses are basic reading, intermediate reading, advanced reading, critical reading and extensive reading which are learned from second semester up to sixth semester. In the second semester, the students take basic reading. In this course, the students learn about simple texts which are included in easy course. In the third semester, the students take intermediate reading. In this course, the students are expected to understand the context and have to master a lot of vocabulary in order to understand the text well. In the next semester, the students take advanced reading which is intended to

¹ English ELLSP of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang graduated on June 2020

² Lecturer of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang



increase the students' skill, critical thinking, analysis and understanding in reading. In the following semester, the students take critical reading which is intended to the students to really understand the meaning of the text in order to measure students' understanding. The last one is extensive reading, the students are expected to understand and explain the text passionately. This course demands the students to make their own reading text. Those reading courses are expected to take by the students and expected to give students better reading ability.

However, in learning those courses students may face certainly barriers or difficulties. For instance, when reading a text, students have difficulty in understanding the text in order to get the meaning of the text. It could be due to the lack of vocabularies that are known by the students. Therefore, the students cannot understand the text well.

Another example is in grammar aspect. The students have difficulty in understanding the long sentence to get the meaning from the text. It means that students' understanding in grammar is one of the barriers that face by the students. Tong and Hao (2017) support and explain that vocabulary and grammar are included in reading barriers that are faced by students.

In addition, many of the students have difficulty in finding the main idea of the texts. They can read the text but they cannot establish the main idea of the topic in texts. Tong and Hao (2017) argue that case is called discourse barriers.

Next, cultural background barriers are also something that is difficult for the students to understand. Cultural background barriers refer to sentences which are not familiar to the students. One of those is the use of idioms in the sentence. The students will automatically not understand the idioms if they are translated word by word. It is difficult for them to get the meaning of the idioms.

Moreover, the other difficulties that might be faced by the students are psychology factor, reading habits, reading interest, and reading strategy. Psychologically, students are experiencing difficulty in concentrating while reading. It can be caused by the psychological factors. It means that when reading a text the students will have less concentration which makes it difficult for them to understand the existing reading text.

The next factor is reading habits and reading interest. Those barriers are expected to be faced by the students. In this case student's habit and taste in reading are influencing the student's understanding of reading text. It means that how often the students read will influence the student's capacity in catching the idea of text. It is related with reading interest. The students will face barrier while reading text that is not interesting for them. For instance, the students are interested in fiction will catch the idea easily. On the other hand when they read history which is not interesting for them, it will be harder for them to catch the idea.

Moreover, there is a factor of reading strategy. Students often experience failure in reading comprehension because they use the strategies so that the failure makes them unable to understand the text.

Furthermore, Tong and Hao (2017) state that there are two factors in reading barriers that are faced by students, which are divided into language factors and non-language factors. Language factors include vocabulary barriers, grammar

barriers, discourse barriers and culture background barriers. Non-language factors mainly include psychological factors, reading habits, reading interest and reading strategies.

Several studies have been conducted to find out the student barriers, difficulties and lack in reading English by some researchers. Firstly a study was done by Mahfoodh (2016) with the title *Academic Reading Difficulties Encountered by International Graduate Students in Malaysia University*. The result of that study is language factors become the most difficulties that are faced by the students such as identifying the main idea and determine the difficult word. Secondly, *Insufficient Preparation of Teaching Reading: What Should Teacher Challenge* Solikhah (2018). The result of the research showed that both language factors and non-language factors are indeed problems and difficulties in reading that are faced by the students. Thirdly, study entitled *Reading difficulties as Barriers to Learning experienced by Learner Entering the Intermediate Phase* Naiken (2016). The result finding revealed that the role of the teacher and the parent are crucial which faced by the students because of the lack of motivation obtained by students. Fourthly, the next research was done by Kartika (2017) with the title *An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Comprehending English Reading text on the MTs Negeri Mlinjo Klaten in Academic Year 2016/2017* which found that language factors such as lack of vocabulary and less understanding to determine the main idea as well as with non-language factors such as reading interest became the barriers that are faced by the students. Fifthly, *Barriers in Teaching Reading to ELLs and Ways of Overcoming those Obstacles* are studied by (Sadeghi and Izadpanah, 2018). It showed that non-language factor became the most difficulties that are faced by students such as psychology factor.

This research has similarity and differences with previous studies. The similarity is some researchers discussed about students' barriers, difficulties and lack in reading English. Meanwhile, this research has several differences. Firstly, the population of some of those researches was post graduate students, junior high school and senior high school students while the population of this research is the strata 1 degree students of university. Secondly, most of the previous studies found that the general factor such as lack of vocabulary and grammar are the most difficulties that are face by students. Thus, this research will try to find out language factors that caused barriers in reading for students such as vocabulary barriers, grammar barriers, discourse barriers, culture background barriers, and non-language factors include psychological factors, reading habits, reading interest, and reading strategies.

Thus in this research, the researcher decides to do research to knowing some factors of students' reading barriers. This research is focused on the third year students of English Department UNP that are registered in the academic year 2017/2018 who have finished advanced reading courses.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The design of this study is descriptive qualitative. According to Arikunto (2013) descriptive research means investigating or describing something similar to the situation, conditions, events, activities in which the study results can be

presented in a research report. Also Gay (2009) explained the quantitative research collecting data through questionnaires, surveys, interviews or observations to answer questions about the current status of the topic study and the research question. This research aimed to find out what the factors of the students' reading barriers faced by English Department second year students in advance reading.

The population of this research is the third year English Department students at UNP that registered in the academic year 2017/2018. There are seven classes: K1-2017, K2-17, K3-17, K4-17, NK1-17, NK2-17, and NK3-17. The total of students of English Department students at UNP is 212.

In this research, the writer uses random sampling as the sampling technique. Samples taken were 30% of 212 third-year students of English Department at UNP that registered in the academic year 2017/2018, namely 63 students. The sampling technique is to take 9 lotteries randomly from each class. This lottery contains the attendance sequence number of students, so the sample is students whose order number is taken by the researcher. In the end, from 63 samples, 10 students will be interviewed as a deeper analysis.

The research instruments of this study are questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire is adapted from Tong and Hao (2017). The questionnaire was designed to include two main parts in terms of language factors and non-language factors. English reading activities can produce eight reading barriers that are vocabulary barriers, grammar barriers, discourse barriers, culture background, psychological factors, reading habits, reading interests, and reading strategies. The questionnaire is validated by one of the lecturers in English Department UNP. The questionnaire used Likert scales, where each is made using a Likert scale of 1 - 5 categories of answers, each of which answers given a score or weighting that is the number of scores between 1 to 5. The specification of the questionnaire is presented in the table below.

Table 2. Indicators of Reading Barriers

No.	Factors in Students' Reading Barrier	Indicators of Reading Barrier	Number of question	Total
1.	Language	Vocabulary	1,2,3,4,5	5
		Grammar	6,7,8	3
		Discourse	9,10,11,12	4
		Culture Background	13,14,15,16,17	5
2.	Non-language factors	Psychological	18,19,20,21,22	5
		Reading Habit	23,24,25,26,27	5
		Reading Interest	28,29,30,31,32	5
		Reading Strategies	33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40	8
Total of Questions				40

Source from Tong and Hao (2017)

The interview was used to collect the data and found out deeper information about students' reading barriers. The questions asked in the interview are semi-structured questions about students' reading barriers. Semi-structured interview provides the possibility to adjust the sequence and the types of questions to follow up the responses provided by the respondents (Kvale, 1996:124). In this interview, the researcher took 10 students randomly as the interviewee.

The instruments of this research were consulted with researcher's advisors and then it was validated by Nora Fudhla, M.Pd, one of the lecturers in English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang.

The data that already collected through the questionnaire were analyzed by giving the score through the questionnaire. The questionnaire is used to know the reading barriers experienced by the students. All the questionnaires were classified based on Likert scales with five answer choices. Every item in the questionnaire was given a score 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for unsure, 4 for agree, and 5 for strongly agree depended on the students' answer.

Table 3. Score for Each Option

Option	Category	Score
1	Strongly Disagree	1
2	Disagree	2
3	Unsure	3
4	Agree	4
5	Strongly Agree	5

Furthermore, to find the result, the researcher calculated the interval range by using this following formula.

$$\text{Student's percentage score} = \frac{\text{student's total score}}{\text{questionnaire score maximum}} \times 100$$

The classification and the score range can be seen by using the Likert scale below.

Table 4. The Category of the Score

No	The Interval Score	Classification
1	0% - 20%	Very High
2	21% - 40 %	High
3	41% - 60 %	Average
4	61% - 80%	Low
5	81% - 100%	Very Low

Source from Riduwan (2010:89)

The interview recording was analyzed after the researcher classifying the questionnaire. Then, the audio recording was analyzed by transcribing it first. After that, the researcher looked up the result of the interview and then classified that into the most reading barriers and the lowest reading barriers that are faced by

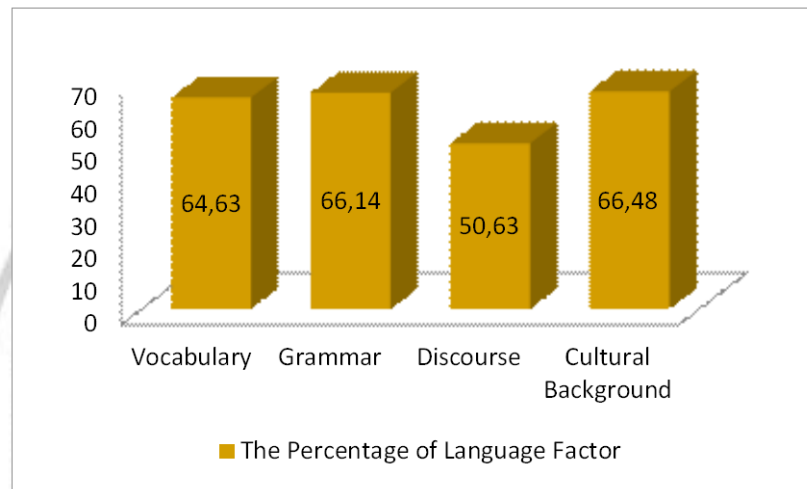
the students. After that, the researcher concluded the result and described the result.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Finding

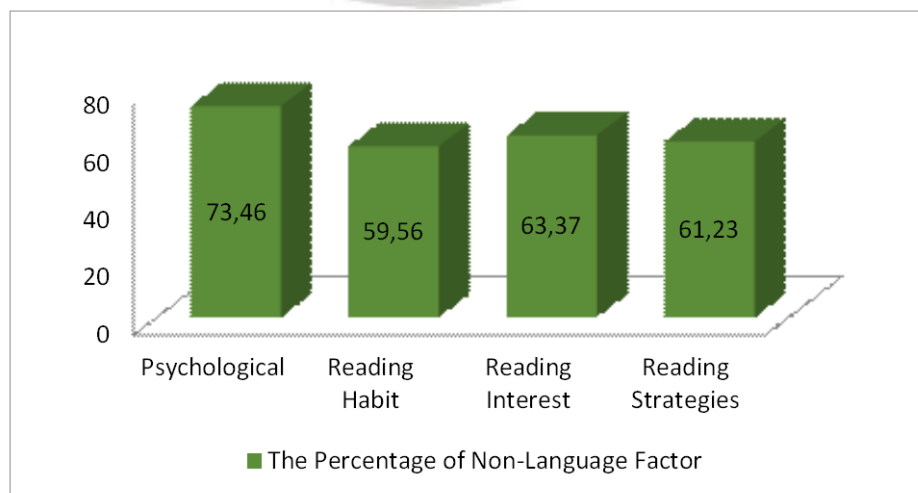
The data has been collected by researchers, through a questionnaire consisting of 40 items from 63 third-year students of English department at UNP that registered in the academic year 2017/2018.

Figure 2. The Percentage of Language Factor



Based on the data that have been calculated by the researcher, it can be seen that in the language factor, cultural background indicator has the highest average percentage score with 66,48% included as a high category which means it was the most barriers that chosen by the students. Then, the discourse indicator included in average category with 50,63% of the total percentage score of barrier that chosen by the students

Figure 3. The Percentage of Non-Language Factor



In the non-language factor of students' reading barriers showed the average percentage of each indicator is also high. The psychological indicator is the most barrier mostly chosen by the students that has the highest percentage score with 73,46% included in high category. Next, the indicator that is rarely chosen is reading habit with 59,56% of the total barriers which means it included in average criteria.

2. Discussion

The data of this study has been collected by researchers, through a questionnaire consisting of 40 items from 63 third-year students of English department at UNP that registered in the academic year 2017/2018. Then, In order to get deep information about that, an interview had been done to investigate reading barriers mostly face by students. In this case, the researchers randomly interviewed 10 students and asked some questions related to the indicator in questionnaire.

Based on the data analysis about students reading barrier, it revealed some factors of reading barrier. Tong and Hao (2017) state that there are two factors in reading barriers which are faced by students, which are language factors and non-language factors. Language factors include vocabulary barriers, grammar barriers, discourse barriers and culture background barriers. Non-language factors mainly include psychological factors, reading habits, reading interest and reading strategies.

Those statements are revealed with the percentage of data for each factor. The first is about language factors in students' reading barrier. Those are vocabulary with percentage score 64,63 in high category, grammar with percentage score 66,14 in high category, discourse with percentage score 50,63 in average category, and cultural background with percentage score 66,48 in high category. The most factor is cultural background. It is supported by the results of students' interview that because they have no experience of cultural background related to that context and because of their lack of knowledge about other cultural background due to lack of reading.

The second is about non-language factors in students' reading barrier. Those are psychological with percentage score 73,46 in high category, reading habit with percentage score 59,56 in average category, reading interest with percentage score 63,377 in high category, and reading strategies with percentage score 61,23 in high category. The psychological factor got the first position with the most factor that have chosen by the students. It is supported by the interview that the students said about if they read a long text it will take a long time to understand a text and make them not concentrate because they have to remember and need many times in order to understand the text.

This study has same results with Tong and Hao (2017) which found the students reading barrier in two parts, which is language factors and non-language factors. However, there is a thing that makes a little difference with this study. The researcher did the interview to support and get the proves about the reading barrier. By interview, the students give their reason about those factors.

Nevertheless, studies from Chomchaiya & Dunworth (2008), Kartika (2017), Puspita (2017), and Ismaya (2017) showed the different findings with this research. The findings of this research are focus in language factors and non-language factors. Those studies showed results about students' reading difficulties.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Conclusion

The goal of the study is to find out what the language and non-language factors in students' reading barriers are of English department UNP. Based on the finding in previous chapter, the most language factor that faced by the students in students' reading barrier is cultural background. It can be seen from the percentage of the score, the highest score in this factor is cultural background with mean score is 66,48% included in high category. Moreover, based on the non-language factor the highest percentage is psychological with mean score 73,46% included in high category, it means the most non-language factor in students' reading barrier is psychological.

2. Suggestion

For students, to minimize their barriers in reading English, they must read more often, especially reading academic English especially in long text in order to make they are accustomed to read that long English text. So, it will be easier to understand English reading texts quickly and correctly. For lecturer, It will be better if the lecturer as a motivator to motivate students about the importance of reading and give the students what strategies are to improve students' English reading. Lecturers are expected to ask students to read more western cultural backgrounds, so students can know the cultural background of a text and increase students' knowledge of western cultural backgrounds so it makes students better in understanding English reading texts. Then students or other researchers can develop the continuation of this study to find other barriers from students in learning English, such as barriers in speaking, barriers in listening or barriers in writing.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arikunto, S. (2013). *Prosedur Penelitian: Suatu Pendekatan Praktik*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- Chomchaiya, C. and Dunworth, K. 2008. *Identification of Learning Barriers Affecting English Reading Comprehension Instruction, as Perceived by ESL Undergraduate in Thailand*. Australia: EDU-COM International Conference. Edith Cowan University
- Gay, L.R., et.al. (2009). *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application*. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.
- Kartika S, Y. 2017. *An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Comprehending English Reading Text on The MTs Negeri Mlinjon Klaten in Academic Year 2016/2017*. Thesis. English Education Department Islamic Education and Teacher Training Faculty.

- Kvale, Steinar. 1996. *Interview: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London
- Mahmoodh, O. H. A and Alghail, A.A.A. 2006. *Academic Reading Difficulties Encountered by International Graduate Students in a Malaysia*. *Issues in Educational Research*. 26 (3).
- Naiken, D.J. 2016. *Reading Difficulties as Barriers to learning Experienced by Learner Entering the Intermediate Phase*. Thesis South Africa: University of South Africa.
- Patel, M.F & Jain, Praveen M. (2008). *English Language Teaching: Methods, Tools & Techniques*. Jaipur: Sunrise Publishers & Distributors
- Puspita, A. 2017. *Students' Difficulties in Comprehending English Reading Text at Second Grade Students of SMAN 2 Metro*. Thesis. Lampung: Universitas Negeri Lampung.
- Sadeghi, M & Izadpanah, s. 2018. *Barriers in Teaching reading to ELLs and Ways of Overcoming those Obstacles*. *Journal of Language and Research*. 9(2), 295-301.
- Solikhah, I. 2018. *Insufficient Preparation of Teaching Reading: What Should Teacher Challenge?*. *IJOTL-TL*, 3 (3): 71-84
- Sugiyono. (2013). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif dan Kualitatif dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Tong, Z. & Hao, J. (2017). *A Study on Senior High School Students' English Reading Barriers and Strategies*. *Journal of Literature and Art Studies*. 7(12), 1651-1659.