



**THE LIBYAN STUDENTS' PROBLEMS
IN READING COMPREHENSION OF ENGLISH
EXPLANATION TEXTS**

A Thesis
Submitted in partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Master Degree
in English Language Education

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This is to state that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Semarang, February 9, 2015

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims at finding out the difficulties faced by Libyan students in comprehending reading explanation texts. Specifically, the objectives of the study is to describe the difficulties faced by Libyan students in reading comprehension of English explanation texts in terms of finding out main ideas, supporting details, implied meaning, writer's attitude, vocabulary, and conclusion. Furthermore, the writer also tries to explain what factors that influence Libyan students in understanding them all.

This is a qualitative descriptive research. In doing the investigation and obtaining the data, the writer used some instruments such as a reading test and questionnaire. There are 30 participants of this study. They are all Libyan students who study in several universities in Indonesia.

The results show that all the students face difficulties in dealing with main ideas, supporting details, implied meanings, conclusion, writer's attitude and vocabulary. They had those difficulties since they do not fully understand the meaning and content of the texts. This is caused by lacks of vocabulary and background of knowledge. The questionnaire shows that most the students are not familiar with the terms implied meanings and writer's attitude. They also had difficulties in dealing with some unfamiliar words in the text.

The writer would like to suggest that the students should enrich their English vocabulary since it is regarded to be the main problem in both understanding and comprehending explanations texts. The English teachers in Libya should teach and give more guidance to the students about the definition and the characteristics of main idea, supporting details, implied meanings, conclusion, and writer's attitude. Also, the teachers need to give extra attention to the vocabulary and teach them a wide range of vocabulary so they can fully understand the text.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Essentially, this part reflects the logical ideas that are useful to form the framework of the study. This part comprises several parts including the background of the study, the reasons for choosing the topic, the statement of the problems, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, the scope of the study, the definition of key terms, and the organization of the writing.

1.1 Background of the Study

Reading in English as a Foreign Language (FL reading) is one of language skills that have to be mastered by second language learners. To master reading skills, the students need to master several prerequisite skills, such as the master of vocabulary and grammar. The acquisition of reading skills needs several processes. There are many kinds of readings and each of them has their own characteristics. In order to be able to comprehend a reading text, the students also need to understand the characteristics and kinds of reading. In foreign language setting, reading comprehension faces several challenges. The English language learners need several steps before they can understand a text in a target language. One of the challenges is the transition from the first language to the target language. This transition has important role in reading comprehension since it helps the learners to understand the content of reading.

The research about reading comprehension has been long and varied (McKenna & Kear 1990; Diamond & Onwuegbuzie, 2001; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Martinez, et al, 2008; Fawson et al, 2009). Reading comprehension is a process. These processes need several instructions. There are many instructions that are introduced to master the reading comprehension such as decoding, oral reading, and reading readiness. Those instructions are used to help students to be good readers. Good readers are active readers. Good readers should be able to have clear objectives of their mind in reading. They should be able to evaluate the text. That means, they need to understand whether the text is meeting their goals or not. Furthermore, teachers' involvement in guiding and coaching the students also play an important role (Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011). The teachers need not only give the instructions randomly but they also need a design that helps students to understand the effective methods of reading instruction. Then, learners' motivation also plays a big part in the development of reading skill (Kim, 2010).

Duke & Pearson (2002, 244) also mentioned that good readers usually look over the text before reading. They also take notes and pay attention to the structure of the text. They also analyze the sections and texts that are relevant to their goals. Furthermore, they also are able to make predictions about the content of the text. They can determine the meaning of unfamiliar concepts and words and compare them with their prior knowledge. Finally, good readers read many kinds of texts. They are able to construct and summarize many texts differently.

To achieve those skills, English language learners need a lot of preparations. For that reasons, comprehension is the goal of reading (Walberg

&Tsai, 1983; Breiseth, 2007). For English language learners (ELLs) this can be the most difficult skill to master. ELLs usually have problems for mastering several subjects, such as math, science or social studies, because they cannot comprehend the textbooks of those subjects. To overcome the problem, the students need basic concept of reading skills, such as read accurately, and follow a text or story closely.

Some studies (Stothard & Hulme, 1992; McKenna et al, 1995; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; Cain & Oahill, 1996; Lazarus & Calla, 2000; Taraban & Ryeneanson, 2000; Block & Pressley, 2001) mention that to help the students to comprehend the reading, the students should be a good reader. The studies examined whether students can produce the productive behaviors of being good readers. Some results indicate that the students can be helped to master some strategies and processes if they are good readers. Being good readers will help them to increase their overall comprehension of the text.

In a country where English is a foreign language, the process of engaging students to be good readers need several process. In Indonesia, for instance, reading skills is one of language skills that have to be mastered by senior high school students in Indonesia. According to *Pusat Kurikulum* (2007) published by Ministry of Education of Indonesia, in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) subject, students should be able to read and write many kinds of texts or genres. The term genres or texts here refer to the definition according to Systemic Linguistic Functional (SFL) theory. Genres are defined as kind of text, such as narrative, procedure, and exposition (Paltridge, 2001). During senior high schools,

students need to learn at least six kinds of genres; narrative, procedure, recount, exposition, description, and report. Furthermore, students also need to learn several short functional texts, such as letters, advertisements, announcement, etc. Therefore, the students are introduced with many kinds of texts during their studies. That means, they need to be able to master the reading skills for all of those texts.

The case in Indonesia is similar with the one in Libya, where English is also spoken as a foreign language. However, different with in Indonesia where English is a language that is highly favor to be an important language to be mastered, in Libya, during the previous government regime, learning this language was considered to be uncivilized behavior (Kreiba, 2012). The regime saw English as a threat. They had a large-scale campaign against English because it is considered to be a colonial language. Even, in 1986 the Ministry of Higher Education of Libya issued a statement that English was no longer to be a part of curriculum in the Libyan educational system. This policy actually had made a long-lasting effect on the education in Libya. Since many English books and materials are eradicated, the young generations faced the difficulties of communicating with the outside world and could not understand the situation in other countries.

English was reintroduced later to the educational system during the previous government's rule, but after students and teachers were filled with frustration. The students were presented with poor learning material with the absence of effective teaching materials and methods. Teachers were also

discouraged being left in an embarrassing situation as lack of practice. They also lost their self-confidence and efficiency as far as teaching English was concerned. Thus even those who were linguistically competent felt reluctant to use English. Unfortunately, the former autocrat restricted all types of freedom, including the right to learn what one had an unquenchable appetite for. The English learning situation of today is indeed disastrous with so many Libyans missing the opportunity to communicate in English effectively.

Since Libyans lost the opportunity to communicate English effectively, automatically, they also have problems in learning all the skills of English. This affects the Libyan ability to comprehend the reading skills. Reading is considered to be one of the most important skills to start learning English. Therefore, the reading comprehension is very crucial in helping the Libyans to master all the English skills. Reading comprehension can be seen as a bridge to connect the missing opportunity they had in the past to pursue the knowledge.

However, the facts show that some Libyans still have difficulties in comprehending the reading materials. In reading, the basic concept that students should master is the main idea and supporting details. By mastering those two concepts, the Libyans can start to improve their ability to understand the concept and the meaning of a text. In reality, the Libyans students still struggle in comprehending reading texts. There must be several factors that influence this case. Those factors are something that needs to be found, analyzed and solved. Therefore, the present study focuses on the identifications of Libyan students in comprehending the main ideas and supporting details of the text, implied

meaning, writer's attitude, vocabulary, and in concluding the text, especially, in explanation text.

1.2 Reasons for choosing the topic

English is a worldwide language and it is widely spoken in all over the world. In order to be able to communicate with others, language skills are crucially needed. However, it has been stated that the Libyan curriculum eliminated the English subject. This results a complicated situation where the Libyan students cannot learn English for a long time. Because of this reason, English becomes a tough obstacle that needs to be resolved by Libyans so they can be able to communicate with people around the world.

The elimination of English from Libyan curriculum stops the Libyans' opportunity to learn English skills. Therefore, the Libyans should start over to learn English. One of the language skills in learning English is reading skill. To start learning a new language, students need to be able to read. That is the reason why reading comprehension is really important for the Libyan. However, the comprehension of reading is still found to be difficult by some Libyans since they still have a gap in learning English language. There must be some difficulties that are faced by Libyans to master this specific skill. Hence, this study focuses on finding out the difficulties faced by Libyans in comprehending reading text. Since main idea and supporting details, implied meaning, writer's attitude, vocabulary, conclusion of text are basic knowledge that students should know in order to acquire reading skills, this study examines the difficulties that the students' have

in examining those respective skills. Then, because there are many kinds of text, the study focuses on only one text, which is explanation text.

1.3 The Statement of the Problem

By discussing the Libyan students' problems in reading comprehension of English explanation text, the researcher attempts to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What problems are faced by the Libyan students in understanding the main ideas of explanation texts?
- 2) What problems are faced by the Libyan students in understanding the supporting details of explanation texts?
- 3) What problems are faced by the Libyan students in understanding the implied meanings of explanation texts?
- 4) What problems are faced by the Libyan students in understanding conclusion of explanation texts?
- 5) What problems are faced by the Libyan students in understanding the writer's attitude of explanation texts?
- 6) What are the Libyan students' problems in understanding vocabulary of explanation texts?

1.4 The Objectives of the Study

As general, this study aims to find out the Libyan students' problems in comprehensively reading English explanation text. Having said that the detail objectives of the study are:

- 1) to describe the problems of Libyan students in understanding the main ideas of explanation texts.
- 2) to describe the problems of Libyan students in understanding the supporting details of explanation texts.
- 3) to describe the problems of Libyan students in understanding the implied meanings of explanation texts.
- 4) to describe the problems of Libyan students in understanding the conclusion of explanation texts.
- 5) to describe the problems of Libyan students in understanding the writer's attitude of explanation texts.
- 6) to describe the problems of Libyan students in understanding the vocabulary of explanation texts.

1.5 Significance of the study

The result of the study hopefully to give significant contribution for the teacher and the students to three areas: theoretical development, practical development, and pedagogical development.

1.5.1 Theoretical Contribution

In theoretical perspective, it gives new insights, specifically in the Libyan students' context, of the discovery of factors that make them difficult to master the reading comprehension. It is also hoped that it provides rich information and functions as a reference for educational practitioners and researchers in Libya and other countries that learn English as a foreign language.

1.5.2 Practical Contribution

For students, this study provides a kind of knowledge that can be used to improve their L2 reading skill. For teachers, this study gives them fundamental knowledge about the solution and teaching method that can be implemented in the classroom for the benefit of the students' development in L2 reading by considering other factors. This also encourages them to implement the best method to improve their students' reading skill. For researchers, this study is also beneficial for those who want to enlarge the scope of research by adding more variables or using different method.

1.5.3 Pedagogical Contribution

For the students, this study motivates them and gives them information about strategy that can be used to improve their L2 reading skill. For the teachers, this study gives them new insights of proper solutions and methods that can be used to improve students' reading skills.

1.6 Scope of the study

The primary limitation of this study is that this would be conducted within relatively short period of time and take place in Semarang. There would be about 30 Libyan students that study in Indonesia. The students are given an explanation test to find out their ability and also to find out their difficulties while reading the texts.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms.

This part would be functioned as glossary of technical terms used in the study. Here, it was arranged in alphabetic sequence and added the definition of the terms.

Reading comprehension is the ability of the students to read text, process it and understand its meaning (Breiseth, 2007).

A main idea is author's primary point about a topic (Behne, 2010).

Supporting details are reasons, examples, steps, or other kinds of factual evidence that explain the main idea (Behne, 2010).

Explanation text is a text which tells processes relating to forming of natural, social, scientific and cultural phenomena (Hyland, 2004).

1.8 Organization of the Writing

On the basis of having systematical and logical organization, this thesis is outlined into five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction section explaining

background of the study, reasons for choosing the topic, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, hypothesis, significance of the study, scope of the study, the definition of key terms, and organization of the writing.

Chapter two refers to the review of related literature by highlighting three main points such as prior studies and theoretical frameworks. Also, this part provides information of the theoretical reviews encompassing the concept of main ideas, supporting details, implied meaning, writer's attitude, conclusion, and vocabulary of explanation text.

The method of the research is realized in the third chapter. It elaborates the Research Design, Population and Sample, Procedures, Method and Technique of Collecting Data, and Technique of Data Analysis. Chapter four presents the research findings and discussion. Finally, the conclusions and suggestions are explained in the last chapter.