

Barriers Analysis in Understanding English Reading Textbook for Seventh Grade Students at SMPN 4 Pancarijang

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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.15803888](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15803888)

ABSTRACT	Article History
<p><i>This study investigates the various barriers encountered by seventh-grade students of SMPN 4 Pancarijang in comprehending English reading materials from their textbook. The research is driven by the awareness that reading comprehension is a fundamental skill necessary for academic success, especially in the context of English as a foreign language. The study employs a qualitative descriptive design involving 24 students from class 7.2, using data collection methods such as structured interviews, observation sheets, and documentation.</i></p> <p><i>The findings reveal that the most prominent barriers fall into three major categories: linguistic, strategic, and affective. Linguistic barriers include limited vocabulary mastery, difficulties in understanding grammatical structures, and sentence patterns, which hinder the ability to decode meaning from texts. Strategically, students were found to lack awareness and application of effective reading techniques such as skimming, scanning, and inferring. Most students relied heavily on digital dictionaries and translators, which slowed down the reading process and reduced engagement with the content. Affective barriers such as low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, and anxiety about not understanding the text further complicated their reading experience. Despite having access to English textbooks, many students expressed feelings of being overwhelmed, especially when dealing with long or complex reading passages.</i></p> <p><i>The study also notes that external factors, including limited teacher intervention during reading sessions and a lack of variation in text types, contribute to students' reading difficulties. While some students reported receiving help from teachers, the assistance was often reactive rather than proactive. Moreover, most reading activities were task-oriented and exam-focused, rather than fostering comprehension and enjoyment of reading.</i></p> <p><i>Based on these findings, the study recommends the implementation of more interactive and student-centered teaching approaches, explicit instruction in reading strategies, and the incorporation of diverse and engaging reading materials. It also highlights the importance of addressing affective factors by creating a supportive classroom atmosphere that encourages student confidence and motivation in reading English texts.</i></p> <p>Keywords: reading comprehension, barriers, vocabulary, motivation, qualitative research.</p>	Original Research Article
	Received: 28-06-2025
	Accepted: 01-07-2025
	Published: 04-07-2025
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	Citation: M. Alfath Khaerul Rijal; Syamsu Tang; Sitti Aisa; Andi Sadapotto The Analysis of Barriers in Understanding English Reading Textbook for Seventh Grade Students at Smpn 4 Pancarijang, UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (UKRJAHS), 1(3), 45-51
	

INTRODUCTION

The ability to comprehend English textbooks is one of the most important aspects of language learning and a key foundation for academic and professional success. As

an international language, English is widely used in scientific literature, communication media, and official documents that support learning and the development of global skills. In the academic context, the ability to read English texts plays a significant role because many

important references, such as scientific journals, textbooks and research articles, use English as the main medium. A good understanding of these texts enables students to broaden their horizons, complete assignments well, and actively participate in literature-based learning activities.

However, the reality on the ground shows that comprehension of English textbooks is often a big challenge for students. Many students find it difficult to thoroughly absorb information from the texts they read. This not only hinders the learning process but also lowers their confidence in dealing with English-based materials. This condition is all the more relevant to research given the importance of English in an increasingly globally connected world. Therefore, this study aims to analyse the barriers that arise in understanding English textbooks. The results of this study are expected to contribute to developing more effective and strategic learning methods, so as to help students improve their reading and comprehension skills of English texts optimally.

Xue (2019) asserts that barriers can be formal, linguistic, or content-based schemas. When the people engaged are not proficient in the target language, communication may be delayed. Grammar and vocabulary knowledge are examples of learners' prior knowledge that can be referred to as linguistic schema. Xue (2019) defines formal schema as the communicators' understanding of the language, usage of conventions, and rhetorical frameworks of various genres.

Aside from the three types of schemas, Brown H. (2001) identified three barriers to language: (a) emotive, (b) environmental, and (c) motivational. emotive obstacles refer to learners' perceptions and feelings about the target language. A favorable attitude toward the language may result in a positive learning experience, and vice versa.

In particular, many learners struggle with reading comprehension as they are starting to read. Students do poorly in reading as a result of these issues. According to Matthew (2020), a lot of children have trouble understanding what they read, which can cause them a lot of stress in the classroom. Since comprehension of academic material requires reading in some manner, students who struggle with reading comprehension usually lag behind their peers academically in a variety of topics.

Coordinating cognitive, linguistic, social, and text-specific functions is necessary for the complicated developmental process of reading comprehension. Reading comprehension, according to this definition, is the act of reading, processing, and comprehending meaning. Despite the apparent simplicity of this description, teaching, learning, and practicing are not always straightforward processes. A person's characteristics and abilities, such as their capacity for

inference, affect their capacity to understand literature. Students who struggle with word recognition expend excessive processing power reading specific words, which hinders their comprehension of what they read. It is necessary to enhance reading comprehension, which includes vocabulary and reading techniques

According to Hadar (2017), the textbook serves as the curriculum's main carrier and assumes a prominent role in the teaching and learning of school subjects. The main material taught in a classroom is contained in a textbook. It is considered that learning the essential concepts found in textbooks is the same as learning the fundamentals of a certain subject. Consequently, textbooks are essential to education because they regulate the amount of knowledge and uphold standards for instruction, assessment, and interpretation while assisting in the systematic transmission of core concepts to future generations.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive qualitative approach is used in this study. The purpose of a descriptive qualitative research is to document a condition, event, or occurrence (Fraenkel, J.R., & Wallen, 2012). Additionally, according to Fraenkel and Wallen, qualitative research is an investigation of the caliber of relationships, actions, circumstances, or materials.

The informants of this study were class 7.2 students of SMPN 4 Pancarijang, totaling 24 students to conduct semi-structured interviews. Informant Collection Technique The determination of informants in this study was done using purposive sampling techniques. The purposive sampling technique is a technique to determine the informant or source with a specific purpose according to the research theme because that person is considered to have the necessary information for the research. In this case, the researcher chooses an informant who knows the problem to be studied and can provide information that can be developed to obtain data.

Sugiyono (2013) stated that the purposive sampling technique is a sampling technique for data sources with specific considerations, such as someone who is considered to understand what the researcher will ask. The purpose of specific considerations is that the selection of informants can represent and be trusted to be a data source. According to Martha & Kresno (2016), this sampling technique means that to determine the informant, the informant must be an active participant in the group, organization, or activity that will be studied, have adequate time, and convey information using their language. In addition, Martha and Kresno (2016) explained that qualitative research does not recognize the minimum number of samples. Usually, qualitative research uses a small sample

Sugiyono (2013) states that an instrument is a measuring tool used in research to measure observed natural and social phenomena. As mentioned earlier, the data collection instrument in qualitative research is the Researcher himself. That is, researchers who observe, ask, listen, record, and take research data.

Researchers are required to obtain valid data. So that the data obtained is not arbitrary and aliases can be accounted for. For this reason, the condition of the information must be clear and follow the needs. This needs to be done so that the data collected can be recognized as accurate, so then the Researcher will use interviews to find out the students' Barriers to understanding the English Reading Textbook and support the data obtained through the recording

1. Observation Sheet

An observation sheet is a guide that

contains indicators used to make an observation. The indicators are a reference and are a limitation in making observations in a study so that the observation process becomes structured and directed and the data generated is unbiased. Sukendra and Surya (2020) state that an observation sheet is a data collection tool needed to obtain data from variables in a study. Sukendra and Surya (2020) also state that the observation sheet obtains information on variables relevant to the research objectives and has the highest possible validity and reliability.

In this study, the Researcher will do structured observation to measure students' comprehension level of the given English reading textbook by distributing an English textbook to students and then assessing students' abilities with indicators.

Figure 3.1 Reading Indicator

Sukendra (2020)

No	Indicator	Skor
1	Highly Understand	3
2	Less Understand	2
3	Don't understand at all	1

2. Interview

The interview is a method of collecting data by conducting a direct interview and structured questions with respondents to obtain the required data Sugiyono (2013). In this study, the researcher will conduct a direct interview to determine the student's barriers to understanding English reading textbooks. Structured interviews will be designed as a questionnaire, not a written question asked but a spoken question made by an interviewer, which records respondents' answers.

3. Recording

Recording is done to collect data because the data in this study is audio data, which will later be used as research material. Recording will be done when the informant answers questions from the researcher. The recording was done to obtain data related to students' barriers to understanding English reading textbooks and data documentation.

4. Documentation

Sugiyono (2013) states that documentation is a means of obtaining data and information that may be

used to assist research in the form of books, archives, papers, numerical writings, and pictures in reports and descriptions

To gather information, researchers will employ triangulation. According to Sugiyono (2013), data triangulation is a method of gathering data that integrates information from several sources, including recordings, interviews, and documentation. Sugiyono (2013) asserts that primary data sources, participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation are the main methods used in data gathering, which is done in natural settings. To learn more about seventh-grade students' difficulties with English reading textbooks, the researcher will employ structured interviews with them. Open-ended interview questions will enable students to openly share their ideas, perspectives, and experiences.

The process of data analysis involves organizing data into patterns or sequential units that may be used to create a working hypothesis based on the information provided, Moleong (2014). The context or condition of the phenomenon is described using qualitative descriptive analysis, and the incoming data is evaluated using qualitative analysis. If an oral literature study is

positivist, data analysis should be done with theory; if it is naturalistic, it should be done without theory. The Miles and Huberman data analysis paradigm will thus be applied, specifically:

1. Data Reduction

The process of selecting, focusing, condensing, abstracting, and modifying the data in the write-up field notes or transcriptions is known as data reduction, according to Miles and Huberman (1994). As the data collection process goes on, there are further periods of data reduction (writing summaries, coding, pulling out themes, creating clusters, creating divisions, writing memos). Data reduction is part of the analysis. Data reduction can be used by researchers to organize and remove extraneous information so that final conclusions can be drawn and verified.

2. Data Display

A display is a concise, well-structured data gathering that facilitates action and decision-making, Miles and Huberman (1994). They believe that the key to trustworthy qualitative analysis is better data visualization, which includes different types of matrices, pictures, networks, and charts. The goal is to incorporate material as it becomes available and decide whether to draw any conclusions or carry out further research based on the presentation's recommendations as potentially useful.

3. Transcription

Transcription is the process of converting audio or video data from a qualitative interview into written text. This is an important first step in qualitative data analysis because it allows researchers to review and analyze data thoroughly.

4. Drawing of Conclusions and Verification

The final step in the data analysis is the drawing of conclusions and verification. Researchers began to look for meaning from the data that had been analyzed, looking for relevant relationships and patterns. This conclusion was then verified to ensure that existing data carried out the interpretation. Following these three steps, qualitative researchers may conduct systematic analysis and produce significant and relevant findings”

FINDINGS

The students had different backgrounds in reading interests and English proficiency. Interviews were conducted to explore their experiences in reading English texts and identify the barriers they faced. Based on interviews with several students, it was found that most students had difficulty with vocabulary, identifying main ideas, and sentence structure in English texts.

One informant, Galank Rambu Anarky, said he had difficulty understanding the reading because he did not understand the vocabulary and how to read in English. He admitted that “Vocabulary and how to read” were the most difficult parts to understand. Galank also admitted that he always translated the text into Indonesian and almost always used a digital dictionary because he did not understand the meaning of the words in the text.

Another informant, Iffah Farwizah Syafris, stated that the main difficulty she experienced was using verbs 1, 2, and 3. She explained, “The use of verbs 1, 2, and 3” was confusing, and because of that, she often used a dictionary or translator to understand the content of the reading. Muh. Faiz Heruddin emphasized that he experienced extraordinary difficulty in understanding the reading. “Vocabulary,” he replied briefly when asked about the most challenging part of English texts. He also felt very burdened and afraid when he had to read texts in English. Meanwhile, Nur Fitri highlighted difficulties in sentence structure, “Sentence structure,” she said. She felt that the length and complexity of the reading material posed a challenge, and she often relied on Google Translate to understand the text.

Based on the findings from these interviews, it can be concluded that:

1. Vocabulary is the main issue faced by almost all informants. They do not understand the meaning of words, even when they can read or pronounce them correctly. This aligns with the findings of Elma Rita Pandiangan, who stated that limited vocabulary knowledge is one of the main barriers to reading English texts in online learning.

2. Main Idea and Supporting Details are also problematic. Most informants admitted that they did not understand the main idea due to their lack of ability to analyze paragraph structure.

3. Grammar and Sentence Structure are significant challenges. As stated by several students, they do not understand sentence patterns or word order in English, which causes the meaning of the text not to be adequately conveyed.

4. Implied meaning and inference are the most avoided aspects. Some students are unaware that they have to draw conclusions from the text and prefer to translate word for word without understanding the context.

5. Motivation and anxiety are also inhibiting factors. Some students feel burdened and afraid when they have to read English texts, as expressed by Galank and Faiz: “I feel afraid,” “Burdened because I do not know English.”

The main obstacles for students in understanding English reading lie in vocabulary mastery, difficulty identifying main ideas, and a lack of motivation to learn in online learning situations. In this context, the students

studied tend to have minimal reading strategies. Most of them only rely on translators or repeat reading without techniques such as skimming or scanning.

Additionally, many students feel insecure when discussing the content of the text. Psychological factors such as fear and anxiety have been proven to be significant barriers in the reading comprehension process.

Therefore, teacher intervention is essential, particularly in providing guidance on effective reading strategies, contextual vocabulary learning, and creating a supportive environment that encourages active student participation in reading activities..

1. Analysis Based on Reading Comprehension

Based on interviews with students, the analysis of obstacles in reading English texts was classified into five main aspects of reading comprehension according to Nuttall (1982), namely:

a. Determining Main Idea

Some students, such as Galank and Faiz, struggled to find the main idea of a reading passage. They did not understand how to identify the main sentence in a paragraph. Galank even stated that he “did not understand” when asked about his ability to identify the main idea.

This problem occurs because students do not have adequate reading knowledge and strategies, such as recognizing the position of the main sentence or understanding the relationship between sentences. This is reinforced by Elma Rita Pandiangan's research, which states that many students cannot understand the content of a text because they cannot determine its main idea.

b. Finding Specific Information

Some students, such as Iffah, mentioned that they are able to find specific information with the help of a translator or dictionary. However, the most still experience difficulties because they rely too much on literal translations. This slows down their comprehension and limits their ability to find the requested information quickly.

c. Making Inferences

This aspect is one of the most difficult. Indra admitted he was “afraid” when asked to read English texts, mainly because he did not understand the implied meaning. Making inferences requires critical thinking skills and connecting implied information, while students tend to focus only on words and literal meanings.

d. Locating References

Some students stated they did not know what pronouns were used in sentences. Galank and Faiz, for

example, always had to reread sentences multiple times to understand the references. This shows that their ability to track sentence relationships is still minimal.

e. Understanding Vocabulary

This is the most dominant problem. Almost all students, including Galank, Iffah, Faiz, and Nur Fitri, said they always have to use a dictionary or Google Translate when reading. This dependence causes the reading process to be slow and ineffective. Poor vocabulary mastery also directly impacts poor comprehension of the reading content.

2. Factors Supporting and Hindering Reading Comprehension

The analysis results show several factors that influence students' ability to understand reading, including:

a. Motivation: Many students feel burdened or afraid when they have to read English texts. Galank said, “I feel afraid,” while Faiz admitted, “I feel burdened because I do not know English.” This shows the low motivation and self-confidence of students.

b. Reading Strategies: Almost all students lack effective reading strategies. Some students “read casually” (Galank) or rely solely on dictionaries (Iffah). This highlights the need for instruction in skimming, scanning, and note-taking strategies.

c. Teacher Role: Most students stated that teachers assist in explaining difficult reading content. However, some students mentioned receiving help only if they asked for it first. This shows that teachers are not yet fully involved in the reading process.

d. Text Variation and Frequency of Practice: The types of texts provided are generally short stories, and reading practice is only done when there is a new lesson. This prevents students from becoming accustomed to reading various types of texts, ultimately limiting their ability to understand a wide range of reading content.

3. Verification and Conclusion

The verification process was carried out by comparing data from several informants to see the consistency of the patterns of difficulties experienced. The results showed strong similarities, namely weak vocabulary mastery, low motivation, and a lack of reading strategies as the main inhibiting factors.

Using a data reduction approach, the researchers filtered the findings into three main themes:

a. Linguistic obstacles (vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar)

b. Strategic Constraints (lack of reading

techniques, lack of understanding of main ideas)

c. Affective Constraints (fear, feeling overwhelmed, lack of confidence)

All of these consistently emerged in almost all interview narratives and were reinforced by previous findings from Elma Rita Pandiangan in the context of online learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that although most students stated that they liked reading and liked English, they still faced various barriers in reading English texts. These barriers include:

Linguistic obstacles, particularly in terms of vocabulary and sentence structure. Almost all students stated that they always use dictionaries or digital translators because they do not understand the meaning of words in the text. Low vocabulary mastery is the main obstacle to understanding the content of the reading text.

Strategic Challenges, namely the lack of reading strategies used. Most students do not apply techniques like skimming, scanning, or noting main ideas. This makes it difficult for them to identify the main idea, find specific information, and draw conclusions from the text.

Affective and Psychological Challenges include fear, lack of confidence, and feeling overwhelmed when reading English texts. Some students stated that they feel "afraid" and "overwhelmed" when asked to read in English, indicating that emotional and motivational factors significantly influence their reading performance.

External factors include teaching methods that are not interactive enough and texts that lack variety. Although some students acknowledged that teachers helped explain complex texts, this assistance was passive, only provided when students asked questions.

From these results, students' reading skills still need to be improved by strengthening linguistic aspects, applying reading strategies, increasing learning motivation, and using more active and varied teaching methods.

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