## Exploring Reading Comprehension Problems Encountered by EFL Students

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**Abstract**

*This qualitative research aims to explore the reading comprehension problems encountered by eleventh grade students at SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja in academic year 2023/2024 and the solutions that students do when experience reading comprehension problems in English reading. Data were collected through observation methods, semi-structured interviews, and documentation involving a purposive sample of eleventh grade students. The results of this study indicate that the reading comprehension difficulties faced by eleventh grade students of SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja are as many as 33.33% of students have difficulty in determining the main idea (3 students), 33.33% of students have difficulty in finding references (3 students), 100% of students have difficulty in understanding new vocabulary (9 students), 55.56% of students have difficulty in making conclusions (6 students), and 22.22% of students have difficulty in finding detailed information in English reading (2 students). And when students experiencing problems understanding English reading comprehension, there are several solutions that are usually carried out by eleventh grade students at SMK TI Bali Global Singraja, such as asking (asking for help) to the teacher, asking for help from friends who understand better, Rereading (repeatedly), Matching and adjusting it to the reading concept, Translating the texts first (use Google Translate or a dictionary). The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the reading comprehension challenges faced by Indonesian vocational high school students and inform the development of effective pedagogical approaches to improve their reading skills.*

**Keywords: Reading, Reading Comprehension, EFL**

## INTRODUCTION

English as an international language (EIL) is considered by applied linguists to be a new paradigm for research, practice and English Language Teaching (ELT) (Vodopija-Krstanović & Marinac, 2019) . This is not only the language used to communicate between countries but also used to develop knowledge. In high school or university Teaching and learning English has a scope that includes the four language skill competencies for understanding and producing spoken and written texts namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. As a window of knowledge Reading can get a lot of information that students need. Reading is one aspect of language skills that is very important in life, both at school and in college. Reading skills (searching for the meaning of words, finding main ideas, memorizing

texts, guessing the level of difficulty of words, etc.) at all levels of education must be mastered by students. Understanding the text is the most important aspect of reading, not only for understanding but also for understanding the text students read. According to Sutherland and Westbrook (2021), In reading comprehension, what is done is not only reciting the symbols and letters in the reading but more emphasis on the reader's ability to truly understand the meaning to be conveyed.

Because English is a foreign language in Indonesia, students may have difficulty understanding the reading text due to searching and finding the wrong words. When reading texts, most students who are learning English as a second language (EFL learners) may encounter comprehension issues, whereas proficient readers will encounter issues by putting appropriate reading skills to use to overcome comprehension hurdles (Hibatullah, 2019). Based on a survey conducted by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) which was released by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2022, Indonesia is ranked 68 out of 81 countries, or is in the bottom 13 countries with a low literacy rate. Rismadewi (2023) has conducted studies on *Identifikasi Kesulitan Membaca Pemahaman Mahasiswa* (Identification of Students' Reading Comprehension Difficulties). The research findings indicate that finding main ideas related to determining main sentences, understanding vocabulary related to finding keywords, understanding synonyms/antonyms, paraphrasing, making inferences regarding making correlations between ideas, drawing conclusions, understanding implicit meanings, making comparisons between ideas are some reading difficulties faced by students. Understanding of English texts is the lack of interest and enthusiasm (motivation) to learn English, students' lack of basic English skills, fear and embarrassment of using English, textbooks considered less attractive are the problems that arise for students when learning to read.

Based on the background, the researcher is interested in finding out the reading comprehension problems encountered by students, especially students in vocational high schools, Therefore, the researcher conducted research at SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja by taking eleventh grade students as participant.

**METHOD**

This research used descriptive qualitative approach. According to Gay, Mills & Airasian (2006), "qualitative research is the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data in order to gain insight into a particular phenomenon of interest. Data collection is an action taken to obtain the information needed to achieve research objectives, according to Sugiyono (2011). Data were collected through observation and interview with students and also interview with English teacher. According to Sugiyono (2018), a research instrument is a device used to measure observed natural and social phenomena. In this research, the researcher uses observation sheet, interview guideline and mobile phone as research instruments. To obtain the necessary data and information, researchers used several data collection techniques namely observation, interviews and documentation to collect data in the field. In this research, the researcher used methodological triangulation. By using methodological triangulation, the researcher utilized the interview method to collect accurate information.

This research was carried out at SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja. This research took respondent subjects from class eleventh students of SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja for the

2023/2024 academic year. This research was conducted in the eleventh grade of the RPL department, where the total number of students in one class was 10 students. However, at the time of sampling, only 9 students were able to attend so that the number of participants who could be recorded was 9 male students.

In this research, the data that has been processed with the steps above are then drawn critical conclusions using an inductive method that departs from specific matters to obtain objective general conclusions. These conclusions are then verified by looking back at the results of data reduction and display so that the conclusions drawn do not deviate from the research.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Before collecting data, the researcher first conducted observations at the school to determine the level of reading comprehension of eleventh grade students at SMK TI Bali Global in academic year 2023/2024. The researcher used an observation checklist instrument and interviews with English teachers for eleventh grade at SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja. The results of the observations obtained show that students have learned English, especially reading material, students have learned reading comprehension material, students have read English reading materials, students have understood the contents of the readings they have read, students have also been able to retell the contents of the readings they have read and students were enthusiastic about learning English. From the interview with English Teacher, the researcher found out that the reading comprehension ability of eleventh grade students at SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja in academic year 2023/2024 was generally still lacking, this was because the majority of students were accustomed to using Balinese and Indonesian to communicate daily. From the interview with English Teacher, the researcher found out that the reading comprehension ability of eleventh grade students at SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja in academic year 2023/2024 was generally still lacking, this was because the majority of students were accustomed to using Balinese and Indonesian to communicate daily.

Researchers analyze all data obtained from research and extract data that supports aspects of the research. Researchers made questions from the aspect of reading comprehension. Researchers made questions from the reading aspect. These aspects consist of: determining the main idea, making inferences, identifying references, finding specific information, understanding the meaning of words or vocabulary. The result of this research found that eleventh grade students at SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja in academic year 2023/2024 experienced obstacles in reading comprehension of English texts. There were 3 students who stated that they had difficulty in determining the main idea of the readings they read, or it can be said that as many as 33.33% of eleventh grade students at SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja have problems in determining the main idea of the reading material they read. It can be said that finding the main idea is not the most difficult problem for students, this is in accordance with the opinion of Wilawan (2012), who stated that many people can find the main idea of the text in a certain place in the paragraph (such as the first, second, or last sentence). There were 3 students who stated that they had difficulty in looking references, this also means as many as 33,33% of eleventh grade students at SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja have problems in looking references. Then there were 9 students who stated that they experienced obstacles when finding new vocabulary in the readings they read, this means that 100% of eleventh grade students at SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja experience difficulties when they encounter new vocabulary in the sentences they read. And then there were 5 students who stated that they had

difficulty in making conclusions from the readings they read, or as many as 55.56% of eleventh grade students at SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja have difficulty making conclusions. This is in accordance with the opinion of Oakhill (1993), who stated that people who have poor understanding of text often have difficulty drawing conclusions from text.. And out of nine students, only 2 students stated that they had difficulty finding important information in the readings they read, in other words, as many as 22.22% of eleventh grade students at SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja had difficulty finding important information in the reading material they read.

Meanwhile, there were 5 solutions that students usually do when they experience problems understanding English reading comprehension. The first solution is asking (asking for help) to the teacher, the student said "I will ask the teacher to explain it a little" this is supported by the teacher's statement that said "Usually what students do when they are faced with difficult or hard reading is they ask me". The second is asking for help from friends who understand more, this can be seen from the student's answer that states "I will ask a friend who knows more about it". So his friend is like a peer tutor who will help explain to his other friends about what other students do not understand, this is in accordance with the teacher's statement "So in that class there are several excellent students who understand more about English, so they are like peer tutors, so their friends teach them how to do it". The third is Rereading (repeatedly), when one of the students was asked what the solution was when having difficulty in understanding reading comprehension, the student answered "I will read it again, and read it again repeatedly", another student also said "I find out the meaning or read it again maybe I read it wrong". The fourth is Matching and adjusting it to the reading concept, the student said "I will match it and adjust it to the reading concept". The last or fifth solution is translating the texts first (use Google Translate or a dictionary, when having difficulty in reading comprehension, students will translate the entire text first so that it will be easier to understand, this is in accordance with the answer of the student who said "I will translate it first, so that it is easier to understand" this is also supported by the answer of another student who stated "Usually it depends on the conditions and place too, for example in general learning I prefer to use my own solution or method by reading it more than once or repeatedly. If for example it is quite relaxed and I am allowed to open a book or cellphone , I usually look for it on Google Translate or other references regarding the vocabulary that confuses me".

**CONCLUSION**

After analyzing the data obtained from the interview results, the researcher concluded that eleventh grade students of SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja experienced obstacles in reading comprehension. The reading comprehension difficulties faced by eleventh grade students of SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja are as many as 33.33% of students have difficulty in determining the Main Idea (3 students), 33.33% of students have difficulty in finding references (3 students), 100% of students have difficulty in understanding new vocabulary (9 students), 55.56% of students have difficulty in making conclusions (6 students), and 22.22% of students have difficulty in finding detailed information in English reading (2 students). The most common obstacle faced by eleventh grade students of SMK TI Bali Global Singaraja is the difficulty in interpreting new vocabulary that they find in reading. Lack of vocabulary mastery causes students to have difficulty translating the contents of the reading, so it will be difficult for students to understand the context of the reading they read.

However, students also have solutions to the obstacles they face. The solutions carried out by students, there are 5 solutions, namely asking (asking for help) to the teacher, asking for help from friends who understand better, Rereading (repeatedly), Matching and adjusting it to the reading concept, Translating the texts first (use Google Translate or a dictionary).

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