
An Analysis of Narrative Text Reading Comprehension Levels in Indonesian Language Learning among Fifth-Grade Students of SD Negeri 10 Airgegas

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ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension plays a crucial role in students' ability to understand academic content and achieve learning success. This study aims to analyze the level of narrative text reading comprehension among fifth-grade students in the Indonesian language subject at SD Negeri 10 Airgegas. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach involving 24 students as the research participants. Data were collected through structured observations and interviews focusing on four levels of reading comprehension: literal, interpretive, critical, and creative. The findings indicate that most students were able to identify explicit information in the narrative text entitled "The Events Prior to the Proclamation." However, a number of students still encountered difficulties in interpreting the meaning of the text, drawing conclusions, and explaining the content in their own words. These results suggest that students' reading comprehension remains relatively low, particularly at the interpretive, critical, and creative levels. Several factors were found to influence students' comprehension, including low reading interest, limited ability to restate the text using their own words, difficulties in constructing sentences, and challenges in selecting appropriate vocabulary. Therefore, more interactive instructional approaches and effective reading strategies are needed to improve students' reading comprehension skills.

Keywords: *Reading Comprehension Levels, Narrative Text, Student's Reading Comprehension Skills*

1. Introduction

Education is a system that encompasses many interrelated aspects that must be understood and carefully planned. Quality education is essential for the progress of a nation, as it plays a crucial role in improving the quality of human resources. In this regard, education itself becomes a primary asset in building a nation (Dwimayanti, 2020).

Indonesia is among the countries whose level of reading comprehension remains relatively low. This is supported by the results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022, which reported that Indonesia's reading literacy score decreased by 12 points compared to the PISA 2018 results, and only 25.46% of Indonesian students achieved the minimum reading competency standard set by PISA. The results also indicate that Indonesian students lag behind the global average literacy score by 117 points (OECD, 2023).

Based on interviews conducted with the homeroom teacher of class VB at SD Negeri 10 Airgegas, it was found that although all 24 students were able to read, learning activities that began with teacher explanations revealed that approximately 50% of the students were still unable to comprehend the content of the text. Their difficulties included identifying the main idea, determining the message conveyed in the text, answering factual questions correctly, and drawing conclusions from the reading.

With regard to reading comprehension ability, each student may experience factors that hinder this skill, both internal and external. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled "An Analysis of Narrative Text Reading Comprehension Levels in Indonesian Language Learning among Fifth-Grade Students of SD Negeri 10 Airgegas."

This study aims to analyze the level of narrative text reading comprehension in Indonesian language learning among fifth-grade elementary school students. By identifying this level of comprehension, it is expected that effective learning strategies can be developed to assist students in understanding narrative texts. The focus on narrative texts in reading comprehension research highlights their significance in elementary education, as they function as a fundamental skill for students. Understanding narrative texts not only improves students' reading abilities but also fosters critical thinking and comprehension skills that are essential for academic success.

This research is important because it can provide deeper insights into the level of narrative text reading comprehension among elementary school students. A previous study by Restiani et al. (2022), entitled "*Analysis of Difficulties in Reading Comprehension of Narrative Texts among Fifth-Grade Elementary Students*," found that the narrative text reading comprehension ability of fifth-grade students at SDN Karangbesuki 1 Malang was still low. Based on this relevant study, the similarity lies in analyzing students' ability to comprehend narrative texts. However, the differences are found in the assessment aspects, student characteristics, and research location, while both studies share the same focus on analyzing students' narrative reading comprehension ability.

2. Research Methods

The method used in this research is a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. According to Sugiyono (2020:9), qualitative research methods are used to examine natural conditions of objects, where the researcher acts as the key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out through triangulation (combination), data analysis is inductive, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization.

Furthermore, Bogdan and Biklen (in Sugiyono, 2020:7) state that descriptive qualitative research involves collecting data in the form of words or images rather than numerical data. Therefore, descriptive qualitative research can be understood

as a method that relies on the researcher as the primary instrument in collecting data in the form of words and images, which are then described and analyzed to provide an overview of natural phenomena, emphasizing meaning rather than generalization.

This research is aligned with indicators aimed at identifying the level of narrative text reading comprehension in Indonesian language learning, focusing on students' recognition and mastery of reading comprehension levels, namely literal, interpretative, and creative comprehension. The subjects of this study were 24 students of class VB at SD Negeri 10 Airgegas. The object of the study was the analysis of the level of narrative text reading comprehension in Indonesian language learning among fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 10 Airgegas.

The data collection techniques used in this study were observation and interviews. The observation conducted was structured observation, in which students were observed based on an observation guide focusing on aspects of enthusiasm and the level of narrative text reading comprehension in Indonesian language learning. Structured observation was used to obtain descriptive qualitative data to support the success of the research in addressing the identified problems.

Interviews were conducted by preparing research instruments in the form of written questions aimed at identifying various factors that cause students difficulties in understanding reading texts. After conducting observations and interviews, the next stage was data verification through triangulation to test the credibility of the data obtained from several collected sources. Subsequently, the data were reduced, presented, and conclusions were drawn.

3. Result

In this study, the researcher aimed to provide a more detailed explanation of students' levels of comprehension of narrative texts in the Indonesian language subject among fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 10 Airgegas. This understanding was obtained through data collection using observation and interview methods.

The observation activities were conducted directly at SD Negeri 10 Airgegas by monitoring the learning process based on an observation guideline prepared beforehand. The observations took place in the classroom together with the homeroom teacher of class 5B and all students who served as the research subjects. Based on observations of students during the learning process, the following findings were obtained.

Table 1.
Results of Observation Instrument

Observed Aspect	Observation Results
Students' enthusiasm in participating in the lesson	During the learning process, all students showed enthusiasm in participating in the lesson.
Students' confidence in asking questions or expressing opinions	Not all students were confident in asking questions. When a student asked a question, some students paid attention to the answer provided, while others paid less attention.
Students' attention to the teacher's	At the beginning of the lesson, all students were focused on the teacher's explanation. However, as the lesson progressed,

Observed Aspect	Observation Results
explanation	several students became less attentive. Similarly, when the teacher explained answers to students' questions, some students remained attentive while others were less focused on the reading text.
Ability to work independently	Students were generally able to complete tasks independently, although some students discussed the tasks with their peers.

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Regarding students' enthusiasm in participating in the lesson, 20 out of 24 students demonstrated high enthusiasm. In terms of students' confidence in asking questions or expressing opinions, 10 students showed the courage to ask questions. Concerning attention to the teacher's explanation, 19 students remained focused on the teacher's explanation. Finally, regarding the ability to work independently, 17 students were able to work independently well.

Based on interviews with fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 10 Airgegas, in-depth information was obtained regarding students' reading comprehension levels based on four levels: literal, interpretive, critical, and creative comprehension.

At the literal comprehension level, most students—20 out of the 24 interviewed—demonstrated good ability in answering questions based on explicitly stated facts in the text. They were able to answer questions such as who, what, when, where, why, and how because the information was clearly stated and easily found in the reading passage. These students stated that the text was easy to understand and that the answers were directly available, indicating that basic reading comprehension skills had already been acquired by most students. Nevertheless, four students still experienced difficulties in answering literal questions, indicating the need to strengthen basic reading skills for a small number of students.

At the interpretive comprehension level, which involves identifying the main idea or implied meaning in the text, the number of students demonstrating adequate understanding decreased to 16 students. These students were able to understand the content more deeply and identify the main idea of each paragraph, although some of them only partially understood it. Meanwhile, eight students reported difficulties because they did not clearly understand the concept of the main idea or were unable to identify the core idea of the paragraph accurately. This finding indicates that many students have not yet fully mastered intermediate-level reading skills that involve inference.

At the critical comprehension level, which refers to students' ability to evaluate and interpret the meaning or message contained in the text more reflectively, 18 students stated that they were able to answer critical questions. They reported that they could understand the meaning of the text as a whole because they read carefully and understood the theme conveyed in the text. Some students also demonstrated the ability to evaluate the text by stating that they understood it because the questions were easy or because they had previously learned similar material. However, six students still experienced difficulties in answering critical questions because they did not fully understand the reading content or lacked focus

while reading. This suggests that although critical thinking skills have begun to develop, students still need support in interpreting moral messages or deeper meanings in the text.

At the creative comprehension level, which refers to students' ability to summarize or condense the content of the text into more concise information, 17 students stated that they were able to do so. They explained that summarizing was done by identifying key ideas, finding essential information, or summarizing based on their understanding of the main ideas. However, seven students still experienced difficulties in summarizing the text appropriately because they tended to copy the text entirely rather than extract the essential information. Some students also appeared unable to distinguish between copying and summarizing, indicating that their creative thinking skills in processing information still require further guidance. Overall, these findings indicate that students have mastered literal comprehension quite well and have begun to develop critical comprehension. However, they still require more intensive support in interpretive and creative aspects in order to develop higher and more comprehensive reading skills.

Based on interviews conducted with fifth-grade students at SD Negeri 10 Airgegas, it was found that the narrative text entitled "*The Events Leading to the Reading of the Proclamation Text*" in the Indonesian language subject was considered relatively easy to understand by most students. This can be seen from their ability to identify information contained in the text. However, several students were still unable to properly summarize or restate the content of the reading. This difficulty generally occurred when students were asked to explain the core ideas of the text, indicating that their comprehension had not yet fully developed. Although some students claimed to understand the text, they were not yet optimal in explaining it because they had not fully grasped the message contained in the text. In the reading process, students are not only expected to understand the surface meaning of the text but also to analyze, evaluate, and relate the content of the text to their personal experiences and prior knowledge.

4. Discussion

Based on observations conducted during the learning process, several obstacles were identified that influence students' comprehension of narrative texts. Some students appeared less focused when the teacher explained the material, demonstrated low interest in reading, and showed varying levels of reading ability. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that students' engagement, motivation, and prior reading skills significantly affect reading comprehension outcomes (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Snow, 2002). When students lack interest in reading activities, their cognitive engagement with the text decreases, which ultimately limits their ability to process and interpret information effectively.

This condition suggests that reading comprehension difficulties are not solely caused by students' linguistic abilities but are also influenced by affective and instructional factors within the learning environment. Students who are less motivated tend to participate passively during reading activities, which reduces opportunities to practice comprehension strategies such as predicting, questioning, and summarizing. In addition, differences in students' reading abilities indicate that the classroom consists of learners with diverse literacy backgrounds. Without appropriate instructional support, these differences may widen the comprehension

gap among students. Therefore, teachers need to implement differentiated instruction and interactive reading activities that encourage students' active participation. By fostering a supportive learning atmosphere and integrating engaging reading strategies, teachers can help students increase both their motivation and their ability to comprehend narrative texts more effectively.

Reading comprehension is not merely the ability to decode written words but involves constructing meaning through interaction between the reader, the text, and the context (Snow, 2002). Therefore, teachers play a crucial role in facilitating this process by providing instructional strategies that support comprehension. Strategies such as simplifying explanations, creating a supportive and enjoyable learning environment, actively involving students in reading activities, and providing clear guidance during reading tasks can significantly enhance students' comprehension. Previous research has also shown that interactive reading strategies—such as guided reading, questioning techniques, and collaborative discussion—can improve students' understanding of texts and increase their motivation to read (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Guthrie et al., 2004).

These findings imply that effective reading instruction should move beyond traditional teacher-centered approaches toward more interactive and student-centered learning. When students are actively engaged in the reading process, they are more likely to use cognitive strategies such as predicting meaning, making connections, and monitoring their understanding. Such engagement helps students construct deeper interpretations of the text rather than merely identifying surface-level information. Moreover, interactive strategies enable teachers to provide scaffolding that supports students with different levels of reading ability. Through guided questioning and discussion, teachers can help students clarify misunderstandings, connect ideas within the text, and develop critical thinking skills. Consequently, the integration of supportive classroom environments and interactive reading practices becomes essential in fostering both students' comprehension skills and their long-term interest in reading activities.

This study also involved interviews to measure students' levels of comprehension of narrative texts in Indonesian language learning and to identify the challenges they encountered. The comprehension assessed included four levels: literal, interpretive, critical, and creative. This framework is consistent with the theory proposed by Dalman (in Restiani et al., 2022), which explains that reading comprehension develops progressively from understanding explicit information to higher-order thinking processes involving interpretation, evaluation, and creative response to the text.

The use of these four levels provides a more comprehensive picture of students' reading abilities because it does not only measure whether students understand the text, but also how deeply they process the information. The findings indicate that students' comprehension tends to be stronger at the lower levels and gradually decreases as the cognitive demands increase. This pattern suggests that many students are still in the early stages of developing higher-order reading skills. In the context of classroom learning, this condition may be influenced by limited opportunities for students to engage in analytical and reflective reading activities. If reading instruction focuses primarily on identifying factual information, students may not develop the skills required for interpretation, evaluation, and creative responses to texts. Therefore, incorporating activities that encourage deeper thinking—such as open-ended questions, text analysis, and reflective discussion—

becomes essential to support the development of higher levels of comprehension. Such practices can gradually train students to move beyond literal understanding toward more critical and creative engagement with narrative texts.

At the literal level, most students were able to answer questions related to the 5W + 1H elements correctly because the information was explicitly stated in the text. This indicates that students have acquired basic comprehension skills, particularly in identifying factual information. According to Grabe and Stoller (2011), literal comprehension is typically the first stage of reading development in which learners focus on recognizing explicitly stated details before moving toward deeper interpretation.

This finding suggests that classroom reading instruction has been relatively successful in helping students locate and recall explicit information from the text. However, strong performance at the literal level does not necessarily indicate deeper comprehension. Students who rely mainly on surface-level information may still struggle when they are required to infer meaning or evaluate the message of the text. This condition often occurs when learning activities emphasize answering factual questions rather than encouraging analytical thinking. Therefore, while literal comprehension forms an essential foundation in reading development, it should be followed by instructional strategies that gradually guide students toward higher levels of understanding. Providing scaffolded questions, encouraging students to explain their answers, and connecting the text with students' prior knowledge can help bridge the transition from literal comprehension to more interpretive and critical reading processes.

At the interpretive level, which requires students to identify the main idea or implied meaning of the text, fewer students were able to respond correctly. This suggests that many students still struggle with inferential comprehension skills. Inferential comprehension requires readers to connect textual information with their background knowledge and draw logical conclusions from the text (Kintsch, 1998). Students who have limited reading experience or vocabulary knowledge often encounter difficulties at this stage.

At the critical level, students are expected to evaluate the message, purpose, or moral value conveyed in the text. However, many students in this study were still unable to analyze or evaluate the meaning of the narrative text accurately. Critical reading involves higher-order thinking skills, including analyzing arguments, assessing information, and forming judgments about the text (Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008). Without sufficient practice in reflective reading activities, students may find it difficult to move beyond basic comprehension.

Meanwhile, at the creative level, students were asked to summarize the text they had read. Most students tended to reproduce the text rather than synthesize the key ideas. This indicates that students' summarizing skills and ability to reorganize information are still developing. According to Brown (2007), effective summarizing requires readers to identify the main ideas, eliminate less relevant information, and reconstruct the content using their own words. The tendency to copy the text suggests that students may not yet fully understand how to process and transform textual information.

Overall, the results of observations and interviews indicate that literal comprehension is the most dominant level among students, while interpretive, critical, and creative comprehension remain relatively limited. This pattern is common in elementary-level readers, as higher-order comprehension skills require

continuous practice, scaffolding, and exposure to meaningful reading activities (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Therefore, instructional strategies that emphasize active engagement, questioning, discussion, and reflective reading are essential to help students gradually develop deeper comprehension skills.

Improving students' reading comprehension also requires integrating motivational aspects into the learning process. Guthrie et al. (2004) emphasize that when students are motivated and actively engaged in reading tasks, they are more likely to apply cognitive strategies that support deeper understanding. Consequently, teachers should combine effective instructional strategies with efforts to foster reading interest, such as using relevant texts, interactive learning activities, and collaborative learning approaches.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that students' comprehension of narrative texts varies across different levels of understanding. Most students demonstrated adequate ability at the literal level, as they were able to identify explicit information presented in the text. However, their comprehension at the interpretive, critical, and creative levels remains limited. Many students still experience difficulties in identifying main ideas, interpreting implicit meanings, evaluating the messages contained in the text, and summarizing information using their own words. These challenges are influenced by several factors, including low reading interest, limited focus during instruction, and differences in students' reading abilities.

The results also highlight that reading comprehension is a complex process that requires not only basic decoding skills but also higher-order thinking abilities. Therefore, teachers play a significant role in supporting students' reading development by implementing effective instructional strategies. Creating an engaging learning environment, encouraging active participation, and applying interactive reading strategies can help students improve their comprehension skills.

In conclusion, although elementary school students have begun to develop basic comprehension skills, further instructional support is needed to strengthen higher-level comprehension abilities. Continuous guidance, meaningful reading activities, and strategies that foster students' motivation to read are essential to help students achieve deeper and more comprehensive understanding of narrative texts.

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