STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON DIFFICULT READING QUESTION TYPES

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ABSTRACT

As one of the language skills, reading also has two types of testing, namely subjective and objective testing. Each type of test has several forms. Although teachers must have their own purposes in choosing what type of test should be given to the students, some types of tests look more difficult than others. This is what this study focused on. The aim of this study is to look deeper into what and why some types of tests seem difficult to students, especially to Darul Ihsan students, which consist of 28 students. The result of this study shows that prediction, conclusion, details, and purposes are the most difficult question types. Meanwhile, the main idea, reference, and inference are quite difficult. In addition, the title, synonym, and antonym are not really difficult for them. The reasons behind this were that predictions, conclusions, details, and purposes need much critical thinking and background knowledge. This was what the students faced and surely should be a vital consideration in the teaching and learning process.

KEYWORDS: *Reading Comprehension, Students' Perceptions, Question Types.*

INTRODUCTION

It is generally known that reading has been considered a solid interaction between the reader and the written text that has interactive action to hold and comprehend the meaning of a text and establish meaning in a proper context (Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Somadayo, 2011). Processing a comprehending text consists of five steps: determining the primary idea, locating specific information, pointing out inferences from written language, understanding detailed information, and pointing out references (Nuttall, 1982). Readers' comprehension skill is necessary to have in order to elaborate the ideas of the text (Nisa et al., 2020; Rusmiati et al., 2022). In other word, reading comprehension is the ability to read, process, and point out the explicit or even implicit meaning of the text and then elaborate on it.

In order to know how well the students comprehend a text, a test is surely needed (Suek, 2020). Generally, there are two types of tests: objective and subjective.

Furthermore, these two types of tests also have their own types of test forms, each of which has its own benefits. Based on the explanation above, here, the writer would explore more about students' perceptions of the most difficult reading question type and what helpful strategy they used to resolve the reading comprehension test.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading is an essential ability for lifetime learning. The reader and the text are having a two-way discussion. The ability to integrate background information with the reading text is the intended reading product (Oakley, 2011). Furthermore, reading comprehension refers to the capacity to read, absorb, and comprehend text. Word reading and language understanding are both required to improve this talent (Zimmermann & Hutchins, 2003). Reading is an interaction between the reader and the text that includes the reader's comprehension of the text's vocabulary, their thoughts while reading, and their assessment of what they have read (Alderson, 2000). Reading is a primary language skill which has a vital interaction with the language encoded in print (Heilman et al., 2002).

Reading what is written on the page and understanding what is meant are the two abilities required to understand written texts (Davis, 2006). Thus, word recognition and language comprehension are two essential skills for students to have in order to become skilled readers (Murray, 2016). Reading comprehension refers to the process of deriving meaning from a passage. Instead of deriving meaning from a single word or sentence, the main purpose here is gain a broad understanding of the subject. According to Stoodt (1981), a student's ability to read is determined by how well they understand the material they are required to read. The three components of good reading—competence, reading strategies, and sufficient understanding—are connected by comprehension (Sukirah, 2000).

A test is generally defined as an assessment intended to measure a test taker's ability (Trisnawati & Netta, 2020). Tests vary in style, rigor and requirements and may be done with or without paper to demonstrate or perform a set of skills (Suek, 2020). A standardised test is administered and scored consistently in order to assure legal defensibility, such as the TOEFL, TOIEC, and many others (Trisnawati & Netta, 2020). A non-standardized test is typically broad in scope and can be used to measure students' competency levels, inspire students to study, and provide feedback to students (Netta & Trisnawati, 2019). The objective test, which requires the tester to select the correct answer from several alternatives or to supply a word or short phrase to answer a question or complete a statement, and the subjective test, which allows the tester to organize and present their own thought, idea, or opinion, are the two broad categories

of test items. Meyer and Kurtz (2006) define objective test as one test in which the response alternatives are designed in such a way that examinees have only a limited range of options (e.g., Likert scale, true or false). The purpose of structuring a measure in this manner is to minimize subjectivity or bias on the side of the individual delivering the test, so that administering and interpreting the results does not rely on the examiner's judgement. Subjective tests are test that require students to make a case on a prompt and back it up with evidence. These tests are often looking for explanation, application, synthesis, and demonstration of ideas. Objective items include multiple-choice, true-false, matching, and completion, while subjective items include short-answer essays, extended-response essays, problem solving, and performance test items. For some instructional purposes, one or the other item types may prove more efficient and appropriate. The main difference between these two tests is that objective examinations are intended to assess specific areas of language, whereas subjective assessments provide an overall assessment of the student's language competence (Shaban, 2014).

Based on the form of the test, some common question types in reading comprehension are matching test, true/false, multiple choice, completion item, rearrangement, cloze, and cursory reading (Heaton, 1989).
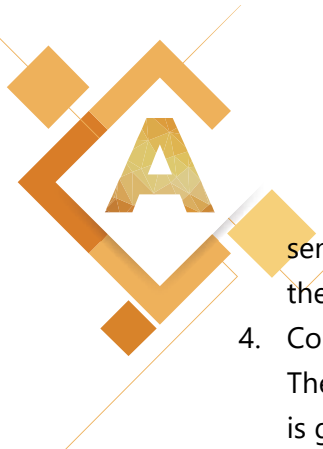
1. Matching Test
    The matching test is divided into three types: word matching, sentence matching, and picture matching. First is word matching, in which the student needs to match the word to a similar meaning (synonym), the opposite meaning (antonym), or the meaning (definition). Second is sentence matching, in which the student is required to find as quickly as possible the sentence that consists of the same word or, at a higher level, can also have the same meaning (implied meaning). The third is picture matching, in which the student is asked to analyze a picture to find the appropriate sentence. Picture matching can also be used to ask the student to name the part of the picture, for example, part of the body, part of the electronic device, and many others.

2. True/False Test
    This test can be used for both related and unrelated texts. The former is a kind of general statement that students know without depending on any text, such as natural phenomena, general nature knowledge, or social policy. The last one is one of the most widely used tests of reading comprehension. This test requires students to analyze the provided text and determine whether the statements are true or false based on the text.

3. Multiple Choice
    This type of test requires the student to choose the correct answer based on the information in the provided text. The option can be a word, a phrase, or a

sentence. The numbers of the option can be three, four, or five. It depends on the need. The TOEFL test is used for this type of test.

4. Completion Item

   The completion item test measures recall rather than recognition. The stimulus is given so that the students can answer the questions. The student is required to complete the questions (sentence) based on a text, a table, or a picture. This is very little difference, however, between open-ended reading tests.

5. Rearrangement

   This kind of test is often used to determine the student's ability to comprehend the sequence of some action. This test can also be provided with a picture series or some clues that the students know the sequence.

6. Cloze

   Although similar to the completion item, the cloze test requires the student to complete a missing word, for example, in a text that has been systematically deleted. To ease the student, the blank space can be adjusted to the length of the words needed.

7. Cursory Reading

   This test requires skimming and scanning abilities to support students speedy reading skills. The students are required to comprehend and answer the questions as quickly as possible.

Some of the most common question types that are found in reading comprehension tests are: main idea and topic question types; title question types; inferences and conclusions question types; prediction question types; synonyms and antonyms question types; true and false question types; word reference question types; sentence and paragraph restatement question types; detailed information question types (5W+1H); purpose question types; and many others.

One of the most important items that a teacher should consider when constructing a test is the level of difficulty. By using various variables, such as learner-dependent, learner-independent, generic, non-generic, and score-based variables, difficulty levels are often used to measure mastery of learning and have been identified in the literature to measure the difficulty level. This can be a benchmark for teachers to know how easy or difficult the test items are. In addition, Heaton (1989) argues that a good test should never be constructed in such a way as to trap the students by providing incorrect options or tricky statements. Using words such as "except," "not," or "but" should also be typed in bold or italic style so that the final aim of the test will be to find out what the students know, not to trap them.

Research Methods

This study implemented a quantitative research method. The study selected the sample through purposive sampling in which the class selected had Reading Comprehension course, consisting of 28 students. The questionnaire was given to gain information about the types of tests that the students were familiar with in reading comprehension tests. The questionnaire was analyzed by calculating the percentage of the responses.

Results and Discussions

The first part of the data was about what type of test the students were familiar with. This aims to determine whether the students are already familiar with several kinds of reading tests or not. The test type that occurs the most can indicate the teachers' purpose in testing the students and also what difficulties the students might face.

Table 1. Student's perception of the frequent level on reading question forms

No	Question form	Rarely (%)	Sometimes (%)	Often (%)
1	Matching Test	14.29	50	21.43
2	True/False	7.14	42.86	50
3	Multiple Choice	7.14	42.86	50
4	Completion Item	14.29	50	35.71429
5	Rearrangement	7.14	50	42.86
6	Cloze	7.14	50	42.86
7	Cursory Reading	7.14	42.86	50

Based on the table, it can be seen that the three most frequent question forms are multiple choice, true/false, cursory reading, or reading comprehension. Multiple Choice is usually used to know a simple answer and also vocabulary such as pronoun referring, synonym, or antonym. The true/false test type is commonly used to determine students' understanding of a text by identifying true or incorrect information about it. In order to give a correct answer, students need a bit of analysis to differentiate between the existing and non-existent information provided by the text. It can be said clearly that the teacher stimulated students thinking in this type of test. The next one is cursory reading. In this kind of test, the whole comprehension of the text is required. The common test type used was a short answer. The students need to think and analyze a lot in this kind of test. It indicates that the teachers encourage students' critical thinking.

The two next ones are cloze and rearrangement tests. These two kinds of tests are closely related to narrative text. In this test, students would focus more on the content or sequences of the text. Since both narrative and procedure texts are commonly used

in this type of test, teachers sometimes give the students this kind of test in order to know the students' comprehension of the topic and their background knowledge as well. The next types are the completion item and matching test. Since it had been a common test that the students got in their previous level of study, the teacher did not focus much on this kind of test.

TABLE 2. Students Perception of the difficulties level on reading question types

No	Question Type	Not Really Difficult (%)	Difficult (%)	Very Difficult (%)
1	Main Idea	28.57	28.57	42.86
2	Text Title	42.86	28.57	21.43
3	References	21.43	35.71	42.86
4	Inferences	21.43	35.71	42.86
5	Prediction	14.29	35.71	50
6	Conclusion	14.29	35.71	50
7	Synonym	42.86	35.71	21.43
8	Antonym	42.86	35.71	21.43
9	Details	21.43	28.57	50
10	Purposes	21.43	28.57	50

The four most difficult tests, according to the students, are prediction, conclusion, details, and purposes. This is related to the previous table, which shows that the most common tests given by the teacher are cursory reading or reading comprehension. Students' background knowledge and critical thinking are both very important to solving this kind of test. Surely, those who lack these two aspects would face much difficulty in answering this kind of question.

The main idea, reference, and inference are quite difficult for them. It is almost similar to the above explanation that this kind of test also requires students to have critical thinking and deep analysis to know what the answers are. The students cannot guess the answer unless they have better knowledge about the topic of the text.

The last three ones, text title, synonym, and antonym, are not really difficult for them. For this kind of question, the students sometimes find a clue in the text, such as the word "and" to find the synonym or "but" to find the antonym. Also, these kinds of tests were provided as multiple-choice or completion-item tests, which made it easier for the students to get the answer, even though they did not have much background knowledge about the topic of the text. However, these types of tests are rarely given by the teacher since they are considered easy tests.

A study was done by Hidayati (2018), Students' Difficulties in Reading Comprehension, in which the focus was the source of students' troubles in reading comprehension tests. The result shows that three difficulties faced by them were the main idea and inferences, and only twelve percent struggled to locate references. Another study had been done by Anti (2011), Analysis on the Students' Language Problems in Reading Comprehension of SMAS Islam Nur Ihsan, in which it concluded that students' difficulties included vocabulary, structure, and spelling issues. Also, as wrote by Satriani (2018), reading comprehension challenges encountered by English students of Universitas Islam Riau, lack of reading habit was also the source of students struggle with reading comprehension.

CONCLUSIONS

There are some points that can be taken into important consideration. Firstly, it is important to give various types of tests to the students since each type of test has its own purpose. Secondly, each type of question has a different skill that the students should have to hone their skills. Thirdly, balancing the difficulty test and avoiding traps in the test are very important for the teacher to reflect on. To sum up, some suggestions that can be offered are that, in order to sharpen the students background knowledge, teachers should provide many various reading materials and discuss them together in the class. Also, giving the students a kind of cursory reading test will encourage their critical thinking. It does not mean that the teacher should test the students with those tests all the time, but by giving them such tests, it will encourage them to read more and sharpen their reading comprehension skills.

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