Analyzing The Relationship Between Students' Reading Interest and Comprehension of Descriptive Texts

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ABSTRACT

Developing interest in reading in students is essential to improving their reading comprehension. This study's objective was to look at the relationship between seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Kayuagung's reading interest and reading comprehension of decriptive text. The study utilized a quantitative correlational methodology, selecting forty students through purposive sampling from a population estimated to be 313 in size. Multiple-choice reading comprehension questions and a reading interest questionnaire were utilized to obtain the data. After confirming the normalcy and homogeneity of the data, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was employed for analysis. With a significant r-value (0.808) higher than r-table (0.304) above the predetermined significance level, the results demonstrated a robust relationship between reading interest and reading comprehension. Simply put, students who were more engaged in reading were seemed inclined to have stronger reading comprehension, which aided their academic progress.

Keywords: *Reading interest, Reading comprehension, Descriptive texts*

ABSTRAK

Meningkatkan minat membaca siswa sangat penting untuk meningkatkan pemahaman membaca mereka pada teks deskriftif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui hubungan antara minat membaca dan kemampuan pemahaman membaca siswa kelas VII di sekolah SMP Negeri 1 Kayuagung. Metode kuantitatif korelasional digunakan dalam penelitian ini dengan memilih 40 siswa secara purposive sampling dari populasi 313 orang. Soal pilihan ganda tentang membaca pemahaman dan kuesioner minat membaca diberikan dalam rangka pengumpulan data. Setelah distribusi data normal dan homogen, korelasi Pearson Product Moment digunakan untuk analisis data. Dengan nilai r signifikan (0,808) lebih tinggi dari r tabel (0,304) diatas taraf signifikansi yang telah ditentukan, hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya hubungan yang kuat antara minat membaca dan membaca pemahaman. Dengan kata lain, siswa yang lebih terlibat dalam membaca cenderung memiliki pemahaman membaca yang lebih kuat, sehingga membantu kemajuan akademis mereka.

Kata Kunci: *Minat membaca, Membaca pemahaman, Teks deskriptif*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a basic linguistic skill that needs to be actively taught and developed. Amalia (2017) has shown that reading is the main building block for writing ability development. As highlighted by Ali and Saiden (2015), it is imperative to realize that reading is an active participation rather than a passive activity. Sudarsana (2014) emphasizes how important it is to understand and interpret a series of terms on your own when reading. In summary, reading is an essential part of developing writing skills. It is an active process where the ability to independently analyze and interpret words is essential and can improve linguistic proficiency.

Interest is one psychological factor that can significantly affect reading (Maden, 2018). Interest is an innate, self-initiated feeling of adoration and enthusiasm for someone or something. A person who enjoys reading shows it through being willing to understand the essential ideas of the reading materials to finish them on their own or with the assistance of others (Aprilia et al., 2020). Interest will also boost students' curiosity to lear reading (Sutarto et al., 2020). Consequently, for students to get actively involved in the reading process, interest is necessary.

Furthermore, reading interest is just the desire to read (Wirahyuni, 2017). Reading should come from a real want to read, not from being forced to (Aida & Yunawati, 2018). Your innate impulse to pick up a book is represented by your reading interest (Utari et al., 2019). That occurs when you enjoy reading since you are aware of its advantages (Afriani et al., 2021). More specifically, this becomes especially difficult in the pre-reading stage (Lustyantie & Aprilia, 2020). Strong readers are more likely to interact with literature, according to research (Renninger & Bachrach, 2015). On the other hand, reading passively can hinder readers' ability to understand the content completely (Asmara & Sartika, 2020).

Early fieldwork at SMP Negeri 1 Kayuagung showed that several students had trouble understanding what they were reading, especially when it came to descriptive literature. It seemed that this problem was closely related to the student's lack of enthusiasm and drive for reading. This discovery aligns with the findings of Abame et al.'s (2017) study, which demonstrated the significant impact that poor reading comprehension can have on academic performance. In addition, the circumstances in Indonesia highlight the need for reading proficiency. Indonesia was the lowest-ranked country out of 79 participating in PISA at 2018 (Schleicher, 2019). Reading scores of Indonesian learners might use a lot of improvement, according to PISA data, which rated the nation 72 out of 79 countries in terms of reading competence. The average reading score dropped further, to 371 even after a new curriculum was implemented for five years. This underscores the pressing need to improve Indonesian children's reading abilities.

A few previous research have also revealed a consistent link between reading comprehension and reading interest. Fitria (2019) discovered a substantial relationship between reading interests and reading comprehension of junior high school students. Purnama et al. (2023) also stressed that students' enthusiasm for reading has a significant impact on their comprehension of what they have read. In summary, reading comprehension scores tend to rise with a student's level of interest in reading.

The study's uniqueness lies in the way the researchers quantified the connection between reading interest and reading comprehension as judged by literal and inferential understanding focusing on descriptive texts. In addition, future researchers wishing to investigate junior high school reading comprehension skills can utilize the study's findings as a guide. Investigate the relation between student reading interest and comprehension at SMP Negeri 1 Kayuagung in South Sumatra, Indonesia, piqued the interest of researchers based on the preceding description.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers utilize a quantitative method to measure the link between reading interest and reading comprehension. Therefore, a correlational research method was utilized. A correlation, a statistical analysis, functions to identify the tendency of two or more variables of data to change over time (Creswell, 2012). Reading interest was the independent variable in this study (X), and reading comprehension was the dependent variable (Y).

The population of the study was all seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Kayuagung in South Sumatera Province during the academic year 2023-2024. Purposive sampling was used to choose the sample, and as a result, 40 students from class VII.3 were elected.

For obtaining the data, two research tools were employed. First, reading interest questionnaire. The questionnaire was a method of gathering data that involved distributing a series of written questions to the respondents. The researcher provided the sample with the translated questionnaire into Bahasa Indonesia to collect data regarding the student's interest in reading. The questionnaire, which contained 20 items, was adapted from Rahmawati (2022). For forty-five minutes, the students looked at one of the agreement levels on the questionnaire. A set of Likert-scale questions was used to collect the data, and the respondents themselves were given the questionnaires to fill out. The respondents marked with a tick (√) in the column of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree to indicate their preference. The reading interest questionnaire's validity score was 0.889. The 20 questions were considered valid because it was higher than the r-table (0.304) with 40 respondents. Given that the reading interest questionnaire's dependability was judged to be higher than 0.07, it was deemed reliable.

Second, multiple-choice questions of reading text had four options—A, B, C, or D— were used for this section of data collection and consisted of 30 questions. In the test, there were six descriptive texts, each of which had numerous paragraphs that focused on literal and inferential comprehension. The reading comprehension test was also measured for its validity and reliability. Out of 50 questions, 30 questions were considered valid. The reliability of the reading test was considered reliable since its result (0.830) was higher than 0.07.

To analyse the data, the data firstly were found its normality using Shapiro Wilk and the homogeneity using Levene test. To analyse the correlation between two variables, Pearson Product Moment correlation was employed. Sudijono (2012) provided five correlation interpretations to determine the size of the coefficient. Table 1 displays correlation explanations.

Table 1. Interpretation of Correlation

r-Score Scale	Interpretation
0.800 – 1.00	Very High
0.600 – 0.800	High
0.400 – 0.600	Moderate
0.200 – 0.400	Low
0.00 – 0.200	Very Low

The Pearson Product Moment was used in the study to investigate the association between variables X and Y. According to Anshori and Iswati (2019), the hypothesis tried to determine the causal relationship between the two variables. Based on the data, there is either no statistically significant link between students' reading interest and their reading comprehension achievement (r-value equals r-table) or a strong association (r-value greater

than r-table). In hypothesis testing, a standard criteria for significance is 5% or 0.05. If the significance surpasses 0.05, Ho is either accepted or rejected, whereas Ha is rejected if it is less than 0.05.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The data firstly were taken in its normality. Based on the calculation using Shapiro Wilk, the data distribution was normal, as indicated by the probability numbers (asymptotic significance) for reading interest and comprehension, which were 0.156 > 0.05 and 0.238 > 0.05, respectively. According to Hinton et al. (2014), data were considered normal when a result was greater than 0.05.

The finding of homogeneity variances shows that the reading comprehension score was 3.389 with a significant value of 0.16. Gray and Kinnear (2012) state that variances can be assumed to be homogeneous when homogeneity result is greater than 0.05. As a result, the significant value was higher than 0.05. There was homogeneity of variance, as required.

Furthermore, SPSS was applied to link the students' interest and reading comprehension. Table 2 displayed the computation's outcome.

Table 2. Correlations

		Reading Interest	Reading Comprehension
Reading Interest	Pearson Correlation	1	.808[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Reading Comprehension	Pearson Correlation	.808[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

Reading interest and reading comprehension are significantly connected, as stated in Table 2, where the correlation coefficient is 0.000. According to Sudijono (2012), the relationship's strength falls within a strong correlation, as indicated by the r-value of 0.808. As the r-value is favorable, it may be assumed that when students' reading interest increases, so does their reading comprehension. In short, students who are passionate about reading will perform higher in reading comprehension tests.

Furthermore, the hypothesis testing in the study revealed a substantial relationship between seventh-grade students' reading interest and reading comprehension. It signifies that the alternative hypothesis has been approved and the null hypothesis was disregarded. The correlation coefficient between reading interest and reading comprehension (r-value) is greater than r-table (0.808 > 0.304), with a significance level of 0.000. Based on r-value and p-value statistics, seventh-grade students' reading interest and comprehension were positively connected. It highlights the importance of reading interest for learners who are interested in doing well in reading comprehension exercises.

Discussion

The current study's findings support earlier perspectives on the connection between students' interest in reading and their comprehension of the texts learned (Rumainah, 2018; Fitria, 2019, Despita, 2020, Alfatihah & Tyas, 2022). As a result, the authors of this study

only elaborate on the connection of the seventh-grade students' reading interest and their reading comprehension. The correlation's conclusion indicated that reading comprehension and students' reading interests were shown to be correlated. Furthermore, it was discovered in the Pearson Product Moment data that there was a strong correlation between reading comprehension and interest.

The study's findings also show that there is a substantial association between two variables: reading interest and reading comprehension. Put another way, reading interest is one factor that affects reading comprehension. Regular readers are more knowledgeable and have a greater understanding of the material. Donal's (2015) study, which showed that reading interest is a crucial component of learning success, supported the notion that once a person begins learning a language, they must maintain it.

Moreover, Hidi (2001) maintained that reading interest has a crucial role in influencing how we choose and interpret kinds of information when communicating with others. This indicates that enhancing reading comprehension is mostly dependent on reading desire. For someone to be expected to support the learning process, they must have a strong interest in reading. Students who are self-interested readers will probably be able to inspire themselves to become autonomous learners, which will enable them to study as much as possible. Additionally, deep comprehension questions, primary idea memory, and text structure all contributed to readers' interest in what they were reading. According to Hidi (2001), interest did more than only increase learning. Readers' motivation to go deeper into the texts' surface structure and concentrate on the important concepts and their underlying meaning appears to stem from this reading desire. Thus, students will be able to study and comprehend any subject with ease if they are interested in it.

To summarize, to maximize the students' reading interest, it is critical to boost it by whatever means possible. Teachers can do this, but students can also do it on their own, with help from parents and all school personnel.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The relationship that exists between reading interest and reading comprehension highlights the fundamental relationship that exists between a student's involvement with the subject matter and their capacity to comprehend and analyze written material. Students who are genuinely engaged in the topic they are reading are more likely to put in the time and effort necessary to understand it. Higher levels of involvement result in more drive, active participation, and a readiness to take on more difficult materials. Furthermore, reading materials that correspond with their interests frequently build on prior information, which promotes a greater comprehension of the subject matter. Thus, having a strong interest in reading increases motivation and serves as a trigger for better reading comprehension abilities, resulting in a positive feedback loop that advances literacy development in general.

Teachers, students, and researchers can all benefit from the Bumper Sticker strategy when it comes to teaching reading comprehension. Differentiated instruction is made possible for teachers, who can enhance student performance through an engaging and interactive approach. Improved understanding, heightened motivation, and the acquisition of transferable skills are advantageous to students. It provides prospects for additional research, creativity, and pedagogical insights for researchers and serves as a resource for future studies around teaching reading comprehension.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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