

## **The Effect of Literal Comprehension on the Higher Levels of Comprehension in Reading Skill: A Longitudinal Case Study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Comprehension in reading skill is generally divided into 4; literal, interpretive, critical and creative which has different indicators and types of questions from one to another. Literal reading, as the lowest level of comprehension is considered important to be mastered by students before they work with higher level of comprehension. This is a longitudinal case study aims to explain the effect of literal reading mastery on the higher levels. This study involved 15 students of English Literature students observed since they were in 1<sup>st</sup> semester to 4<sup>th</sup> semester. The instruments used are working sheets to measure students' ability in each level of comprehension. The findings showed that students with good and very good mastery of literal comprehension worked good on interpretive, critical and creative level. The students with poor mastery of literal comprehension did not have good results on interpretive, critical and creative level. It revealed that literal comprehension has important role in building students' comprehension before they continue to the next levels.

**Keywords:** number of keywords consist 3-5 words or phrases.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Reading skill mastery is regarded crucial because reading without it is simply following words on a text. Many studies have been undertaken to improve pupils' reading skills through the use of various methodologies, media, or techniques. Kazemi et al. (2020) used a repetitive procedure of pretest- teach- retest as a dynamic assessment cycle to contribute to the process of increasing reading comprehension skills.

Shemshadsara et al. (2019) used structural awareness to increase the reading comprehension skills of EFL students in their other study.

Another case study reported by Douglas (2019) tried to increase students' reading comprehension skills through the use of a Reading Lab. These studies demonstrate how reading comprehension competence remains the center of reading skill.

Reading skill, according to Oakhill et al. (2015, p.12), is associated with the ability to process a single word while being supported by linguistic understanding. Comprehension refers to pupils' capacity to comprehend a text or material, which includes predicting what will happen next, checking their understanding, clarifying unclear parts, and relating what they read to their experiences or past knowledge. Because academic growth in school is based on understanding, evaluating, and applying knowledge, pupils' reading comprehension deficiencies might impede their advancement. Nanda (2020) backs this up by noting that inadequate ability leads to lower academic accomplishment, lower problem-solving skills, and inhibition in the future learning process. The definitions above demonstrate how critical proper training is at each level of reading. Cabral and Tavares (2002) observed that the majority of the students engaged in their study had an intermediate level of reading competency, despite the level they should have reached. It has been discovered that students adopt particular general methods related to specific tasks and learning habits in order to feel more at ease when doing reading activities. Students, on the other hand, tend to avoid using techniques that entail interaction with professors, as well as more specialized tactics that may control/determine their academic writing duties and indicate a greater level of expertise. This method is seen to be appropriate for use in the high-tech era, as classrooms are no longer held face-to-face.

While the demand for high-level readers, such as university students, is increasing, many university students are unable to meet the requirements. They are still struggling with lower-level skills that should have been mastered in previous stages. The preliminary study was conducted in three levels of reading comprehension classes: interpretative, critical, and creative. The study discovered that students with higher levels of reading comprehension still struggled with aspects that children with lower levels of reading comprehension should have no trouble with, such as determining the major concepts and topic of reading.

In general, reading skills are categorized into four tiers. According to Sari (2015), the materials supplied to students should be based on the level that students will master. The first level is literal reading, in which pupils are expected to reproduce the facts supplied by the writer, such as grasping word meanings, recalling stated concepts, summarizing ideas, recalling important ideas, and acknowledging the sequence of events or information. The second level is the interpretive level, in which students are expected to work with textual significances, observe numerous relationships in the text, create a comparison, draw a conclusion, and generalize knowledge. It comprises information reasoning such as determining the writer's tone,

aims, attitude, concluding facts, and major idea. The third level is critical, where pupils must study, evaluate, and judge material. The writer employs language that can direct readers' understanding based on the data offered, the writer's point of view, intent, and honesty. It discusses examining and evaluating language quality using some standards. In general, the greatest level is the creative level, which works with readers' involvement in the material to rethink the ideas. Responding using literary techniques of various kinds, styles, and structures is required. As a result, each level has different learning objectives, and it is preferable for pupils to master the lower levels before moving on to the higher ones.

Literal reading as a low level of comprehension encompasses behaviours in the learning process that are said to be crucial as the foundation of higher-level comprehension growth. According to Saadatnia et al. (2017), literal understanding necessitates students extracting specific information from a paragraph. This requires the capacity to process words individually and recognize individual words in order to derive meaning from a long string of words that includes propositions and sentences. Literal reading comprehension should contain the context, facts, and sequence that can exist in a text, according to research. The context can be defined as the entire image formed by the correlation of facts, where facts are information placed in a text and sequences are how the information is organized in chronological order of occurrences. This level of understanding also requires pupils to determine the correct and accurate meaning of words or terminology used in a book at the word or sentence level, to gather information from reading, and to paraphrase what they learn. This diagram depicts the skills that students should have mastered by the end of the literal reading course.

Literal reading, being the lowest level of understanding, is regarded important because it needs pupils to develop skills. This highlights the need of assisting children with literal comprehension using a variety of tactics. Naniwarsih & Andriani (2018) reveal in their study that pupils in their third year of junior high school have a strong degree of literal reading comprehension. However, the questionnaire results suggest that pupils struggle with vocabulary since they have inadequate vocabulary knowledge. Given the importance of vocabulary acquisition in literal reading comprehension, the study's findings cannot be justified as valid.

This present study attempts to answer the gap among the previous researches about how literal comprehension in reading affects the higher levels of comprehension; interpretive, critical, creative. It is important to observe how literal comprehension plays roles in the development of comprehension skill especially in reading skill.

## METHOD

The design used in the present study is Longitudinal case study. In a study presented by Šamo & Mikulec (2018), the design was used to observe the development of reading metacomprehension of EFL students. In this present study, longitudinal cases study was employed to observe how literal reading comprehension they get on the 1<sup>st</sup> semester affects their skill in interpretive reading level on 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, critical reading level on 3<sup>rd</sup> semester and the creative reading level on 4<sup>th</sup> semester.

This study involves 20 students of English Literature as the subjects.

In each semester, their achievement in each semester is recorded to be used as the benchmark for their achievement on the next semester. The achievement included the mastery of each aspect of reading comprehension according to the criteria of the level.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that 22 students with good level of literal reading comprehension with score between 81-85 showed good level of interpretive reading comprehension by being able to completing assignment in each level with types of questions that are suitable to the level of the comprehension.

When students reached the interpretive level, they had no problems working on questions about the meaning of the text, noting numerous relationships in the text, making a comparison, drawing a conclusion, and generalizing information. Since they have mastered the notion of literal reading comprehension, it includes reasoning with information such as getting the tone of the writer, the purposes, the attitude, concluding facts, and the primary idea.

Related to the ability of critical level, the students easily learn, evaluate, and judge information since they have no problems in understanding main idea of a paragraph which is gained in literal reading level.

When the students reached the creative level, they no longer have difficulties in completing questions such as delivering opinions on a text since they have comprehended the text thoroughly by building the ability to understand words in literal reading level. This understanding is supported by having strong foundation built in every level of comprehension.

The findings above support the idea of Oakhill et al. (2015, p.12) which state that it is important to have the ability to process words before actually works with language comprehension. Literal reading comprehension builds students ability by starting to introduce words meaning before working with longer texts.

## CONCLUSION

It can be inferred that it is important to build strong literal reading comprehension as a foundation for students on the higher level of reading comprehension. These findings are expected to contribute to the field of study by giving insight on how literal reading comprehension as the lowest level of comprehension has important roles in students' language development. Future studies are expected to examine whether the effects created are related to gender of students.

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