

**AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN
IDENTIFYING MAIN IDEAS IN DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS
AT SMA NEGERI 1 PANYABUNGAN**



THESIS

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Language Education

By :

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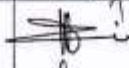
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ABSTRACT

Zenat Kautsar (NIM. 21130018). This research was entitled “*An Analysis of Students’ Difficulties in Identifying Main Ideas in Descriptive Texts at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan.*”

This research aimed to identify the difficulties faced by students in recognizing main ideas within descriptive texts and to examine how teachers addressed these challenges. A descriptive qualitative approach was utilized, involving tenth-grade students from SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan as subjects. Data collection methods included reading tests, interviews, classroom observations, and questionnaires. The reading test evaluated students’ ability to pinpoint main ideas in descriptive texts, while the other instruments provided comprehensive insights into students’ difficulties, contributing factors, and the instructional strategies employed by the teacher. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that students continued to struggle with identifying main ideas in descriptive texts. Major difficulties included limited vocabulary, challenges in understanding sentences, difficulty in discerning main ideas, and trouble comprehending lengthy descriptive texts. The reading test results indicated that 10 students (43.48%) were categorized as high, 9 students (39.13%) as medium, and 4 students (17.39%) as low in their ability to identify main ideas. Additionally, the results from interviews, classroom observations, and questionnaires highlighted that limited vocabulary, insufficient understanding of main ideas and supporting details, low reading interest, challenges with English text comprehension, and lack of motivation were primary contributing factors. In summary, identifying main ideas in descriptive texts remains a significant challenge for some students at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan. Therefore, implementing effective teaching strategies, enhancing vocabulary, encouraging consistent reading practice, and increasing motivation are crucial for improving students’ reading comprehension.

Keywords: Students’ Difficulties, Main Ideas, Descriptive Texts, Reading Comprehension.

MOTTO

**“ ONE PAGE, ONE LESSON,
ONE STEP CLOSER TO THE
DREAM.”**

(Q.S An-Najm: 39)

**Every Achievement Begins with
Effort, and Every Small Step is
Part of the Journey Toward
Success.**

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The Writer



ZENAT KAUTSAR

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Reading is one of the essential skills in learning English as a foreign language because it enables students to understand written information, expand their vocabulary, and develop critical thinking skills. Through reading activities, students are expected not only to recognize words and sentences but also to comprehend the meaning conveyed in a text. Therefore, reading comprehension plays a crucial role in academic success, especially in understanding various types of texts used in English language learning. A core component of reading comprehension is the capacity to isolate the main idea of a text or paragraph, which encapsulates the central thought or primary message intended by the author. Discerning the main idea enables readers to capture the overarching meaning of a text while differentiating essential information from supporting details (Afflerbach, 2020). Without this analytical skill, students may physically read a text yet fail to synthesize and grasp its core message.

Within the framework of secondary English language education, learners are routinely expected to read texts and respond to comprehension assessments, a significant portion of which directly target main idea identification. When students struggle with this competency, their holistic text comprehension becomes constrained, frequently resulting in erroneous responses and misinterpretations of the reading material. This underscores that main idea extraction is not a secondary ability, but rather a fundamental pillar of effective reading comprehension. Furthermore, identifying the core concept is inextricably linked to a student's capacity to organize information and decode text architecture. By recognizing the main idea, learners can logically connect supporting details, draw valid inferences, and summarize texts with greater accuracy (Snow & Uccelli, 2021). This proficiency is particularly critical in descriptive texts, where information is commonly distributed across multiple sentences outlining the specific characteristics of an entity, individual, or location.

Furthermore, the capacity to discern main idea elements fosters autonomous reading proficiency. Learners who master this skill typically exhibit greater reading confidence, as they can concentrate on primary information without becoming overwhelmed by unfamiliar vocabulary or complex sentence structures (Harmer, 2021). Consequently, reinforcing students' proficiency in identifying main ideas remains indispensable for elevating both holistic reading comprehension and broader academic performance.

Despite the theoretical consensus regarding the critical role of reading comprehension and main idea extraction, authentic classroom realities reveal that numerous learners continue to encounter hurdles in operationalizing these proficiencies. Consequently, investigating empirical classroom conditions is essential to uncover the determinants underlying students' struggles with identifying core concepts in descriptive texts. Initial classroom observations and informal dialogues with the English instructor at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan disclosed that students faced substantial challenges in isolating main ideas within descriptive materials. The teacher noted that descriptive genres were only superficially introduced at the onset of the semester prior to transitioning toward structural grammar instruction, specifically verb tenses, thereby restricting students' opportunities for targeted main idea practice. During preliminary observations, several learners exhibited difficulties in accurately locating paragraph central thoughts, frequently defaulting to copying the initial sentence of a paragraph without discerning whether it constituted the main idea or a mere supporting detail.

Furthermore, during the preliminary reading activities, students showed limited engagement in analyzing the content of the text. When asked to explain the main idea orally, several students were unable to provide clear answers and relied heavily on the teacher's explanation. This finding suggests that many students depended on word-for-word translation rather than applying appropriate reading strategies to identify the main idea of the text. Classroom observations and the preliminary interview with the English teacher also revealed that reading instruction was mostly teacher-centered. According to the teacher, descriptive texts were introduced only briefly before the lessons shifted to grammar instruction, particularly the teaching

of tenses. Consequently, classroom activities mainly consisted of reading the text aloud, translating vocabulary, and answering comprehension questions. However, students were not explicitly guided to identify topic sentences, distinguish between main ideas and supporting details, or apply reading strategies such as skimming to understand the overall meaning of the text. As a result, students lacked the necessary skills to identify the main ideas independently.

In addition, students' difficulties were reflected in their written responses to reading comprehension questions. Many of their answers were incomplete or irrelevant, indicating that they did not fully understand the content of the text. This finding suggests that students' difficulties were not caused solely by the descriptive text itself but were also related to the way they were guided during the learning process. Therefore, these classroom findings indicated a gap between the expected learning outcomes and the students' actual reading performance. This gap highlighted the need to analyze students' difficulties in identifying the main ideas in relation to the teaching methods and techniques used during reading instruction.

Teachers' methods and techniques play an important role in developing students' reading comprehension skills. Effective reading instruction requires teachers to explicitly guide students in identifying the main ideas, understanding text organization, and distinguishing between main ideas and supporting details. Without appropriate instructional methods and techniques, students may struggle to comprehend texts even when the material is suitable for their level (Harmer, 2021). In reading instruction, teachers are expected to introduce reading strategies such as identifying topic sentences, skimming to gain a general understanding, and analyzing paragraph structure. When these strategies are not taught explicitly, students tend to focus on translating sentences rather than understanding the main message of the text (Grabe & Zhang, 2021).

Based on the preliminary classroom observations and the informal interview with the English teacher, the teacher mainly used reading-aloud activities, vocabulary translation, and question-and-answer activities during reading instruction. Although these activities helped students understand the text at a basic level, they did not sufficiently train students to identify the main ideas

independently. As a result, many students remained dependent on the teacher's explanations and experienced difficulties when they were asked to identify the main ideas independently. Therefore, students' difficulties in identifying the main ideas were closely related to the instructional process, particularly the teaching methods and techniques applied during reading instruction. This finding suggests that the problem lay not only in the descriptive texts themselves but also in the way reading instruction was conducted in the classroom.

Several studies have emphasized the importance of reading comprehension and the ability to identify the main ideas in English language learning. Previous research has also shown that students often experience difficulties in identifying the main ideas when reading various types of texts. However, most of these studies have primarily focused on students' reading achievement or on the complexity of the reading materials used in classroom instruction. In the context of English language teaching at the senior high school level, descriptive texts are commonly included as learning materials in the curriculum. Nevertheless, based on the preliminary classroom observations and the informal interview with the English teacher at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan, students continued to experience difficulties in identifying the main ideas even though descriptive texts had been introduced in the classroom. This finding indicates that the problem was not merely related to the type of text but was also associated with the instructional process during reading lessons.

Nevertheless, based on the factual conditions found in the classroom at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan, students continued to experience difficulties in identifying the main ideas even when reading descriptive texts. This indicates that the problem does not lie in the text type itself but rather in the instructional process during reading lessons. The research gap lies in the limited attention given to the role of teachers' methods and techniques in helping students identify the main ideas of descriptive texts. While many previous studies have discussed reading strategies in general, only a few have specifically examined how teaching methods and techniques contribute to students' difficulties in identifying the main ideas during classroom instruction. Consequently, there is still limited understanding of how instructional practices influence students' ability to identify the main ideas in

descriptive texts.

Therefore, this study was conducted to address this gap by analyzing students' difficulties in identifying the main ideas of descriptive texts in relation to the teaching methods and techniques used during reading instruction. Rather than testing the effectiveness of a particular teaching method, this study aimed to provide an in-depth analysis of the existing instructional practices and the difficulties experienced by students. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights into the instructional factors that influence students' reading comprehension, particularly their ability to identify the main ideas.

In addition, there is still limited research that explores students' difficulties in identifying the main ideas within a specific local educational context. Most previous studies were conducted in urban schools or in more general educational settings, which may not fully represent the actual classroom conditions in other regions. Consequently, the characteristics of students, classroom interaction patterns, and instructional practices at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan have not been sufficiently explored. This gap highlights the need for a context-specific analysis to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of students' difficulties in identifying the main ideas in authentic classroom situations.

This study is designed as a descriptive qualitative study that focuses on analyzing and describing students' difficulties in identifying the main ideas of descriptive texts. The main purpose of this study is not to test the effectiveness of a particular teaching method or to apply an experimental treatment. Instead, it aims to analyze the existing classroom conditions and the instructional practices used during reading instruction. The study seeks to explore the types of difficulties experienced by students in identifying the main ideas of descriptive texts and to examine how these difficulties are related to the teaching methods and techniques used by the teacher during reading instruction. Therefore, this study emphasizes an in-depth analysis of students' learning experiences rather than comparing different teaching methods or evaluating the effectiveness of an instructional intervention. Data are collected to obtain a comprehensive understanding of students' reading difficulties and the instructional factors that contribute to those difficulties.

By employing a descriptive qualitative approach, this study provides a detailed description of the actual classroom conditions and students' learning experiences. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights into the instructional factors that influence students' ability to identify the main ideas of descriptive texts. In addition, the findings are expected to serve as useful references for English teachers in improving reading instruction, particularly in helping students identify the main ideas of descriptive texts more effectively.

Based on the research gap identified and the findings from the preliminary classroom observations, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth analysis of students' difficulties in identifying the main ideas of descriptive texts in relation to the teaching methods and techniques used during reading instruction. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled: An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Identifying Main Ideas in Descriptive Texts at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan.

B. Research Question

Based on the background above, the formulation of the problem in this study is as follows:

1. What are the students' difficulties in identifying the main ideas in descriptive texts at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan?
2. How does the teacher use teaching methods and technique to help students identify the main ideas in descriptive texts?

C. Research Objective

Research objective based on the formulation of the problem above, the objectives of this study are as follows :

1. To identify and describe the students' difficulties in identifying the main ideas in descriptive texts at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan
2. To describe how the teacher uses teaching methods and technique to help students identify the main ideas in descriptive texts.

D. Significance of Study

This research is expected to provide benefits both theoretically and practically, as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefits

This study is expected to enrich the existing literature on reading comprehension, particularly related to students' difficulties in identifying main ideas in descriptive texts. This research provides a deeper understanding of how students experience difficulties not only in identifying the main idea but also recognizing supporting details and concluding sentences within descriptive text paragraphs.

In addition, this study contributes to the theoretical discussions on reading difficulties by highlighting the role of instructional methods and techniques used by teachers during reading lessons. By analyzing students' difficulties in relation to classroom instructional practices, this study offers insights into how teaching approaches may influence students' reading comprehension, especially in identifying main ideas. Therefore, the findings of this study may serve as a reference for future studies focusing on reading instruction and students' reading difficulties in EFL contexts.

2. Practical Benefits

a. For English teacher

Practically, this study is expected to provide English teachers with a clearer understanding of students' difficulties in identifying main ideas, supporting details, and concluding sentences in descriptive texts. The findings can help teachers reflect on the methods and techniques they use during reading instruction and consider adjustments to better support students' reading comprehension. This study does not aim to evaluate teachers' performance, but rather to offer insight that may assist teachers in improving their instructional practices.

b. For students

For students, this study is expected to help them become more aware of the specific difficulties they face when identifying main ideas in

deceptive texts. By understanding these difficulties, students may develop better reading strategies and improve their ability to comprehend texts more effectively. The results of this study may also encourage students to be more active and confident during reading activities in the classroom.

c. For school

For school, this study is expected to provide useful information regarding students' reading difficulties and the instructional factors that influence reading comprehension. The findings may serve as input for schools in evaluating and improving reading instruction practices, particularly in English language learning. This study may also support schools in developing more effective learning environments that enhance students' reading comprehension skills.

d. For future researchers

For future researchers, this study is expected to serve as a reference for conducting similar studies related to students' reading difficulties and reading instruction. The findings and methodology of this research may provide guidance for future studies that aim to analyze reading difficulties in different text types, educational levels, or instructional contexts. Future researchers may also use this study as a foundation for developing further research in the field of English language education.