



An Analysis of Students' Reading Comprehension of Explanation Text at The Tenth Grade of SMA Ekasakti Padang

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Abstrak: This study analyzed the reading comprehension of explanation text among tenth-grade students of Social Science at SMA Ekasakti Padang. The study focused on students' ability to comprehend five components of explanation text: title, general statement, sequence of explanation, conclusion, and main idea. The participants were 10 students. Data were collected through a 20-item multiple-choice reading comprehension test administered within 60 minutes and a questionnaire concerning students' reading difficulties. The results showed that the overall mean score was 71.5, which was categorized as good based on the criteria used in the study. Among the five components, conclusion obtained the highest mean score (95.0), followed by explanation and main idea (80.0 each), general statement (63.3), and title (60.0). The questionnaire indicated three major problems: difficulty reading the explanation text thoroughly, limited vocabulary mastery, and difficulty determining the general statement. The findings suggest that students generally demonstrated good comprehension, but specific support is still needed in identifying text structure, expanding vocabulary, and developing careful reading strategies.

Keywords: Reading Comprehension; Explanation Text; Reading Difficulties; Tenth-Grade Students

Introduction

Reading is one of the central skills in English language learning because students need to understand written information for academic and everyday purposes. Reading comprehension involves more than recognizing individual words; readers need to identify important information, connect ideas, interpret the organization of a text, and construct meaning from what they read. In an English as a Foreign Language context, these processes can become difficult when students have limited vocabulary or are unfamiliar with the organization of a particular genre.

Explanation text is one of the text types taught in senior high school. It generally explains how or why a natural, social, or other phenomenon occurs through an organized sequence of information. Understanding the structure of an explanation text is therefore important because the meaning of the text is closely related to how information is presented. Students need to recognize the general statement, follow the sequence of explanation, and understand the concluding information. They also need to identify the main idea and interpret relevant details.

Previous studies have discussed students' difficulties in reading or producing explanation texts. Sachran, Munir, and Aeni (2022), for example, reported difficulties related to reading comprehension of explanation text, while Sulistiyo (2013) analyzed students' reading comprehension in explanation text. Mislaini (2015) also examined efforts to improve students' reading comprehension of explanation text. More recently, Nuraswadi, Abdullah, and Munir (2026) found that contextual clues significantly affected eleventh-grade students' comprehension of explanation text, and Prakoso, Seriardana, and Adnyani (2021) reported that a genre-based approach improved students' skill in writing explanation text. These studies indicate that explanation text remains an important area for classroom attention.

Based on the research context at SMA Ekasakti Padang, this study was conducted to identify the level of students' reading comprehension of explanation text and the problems experienced by students. The study is descriptive in nature and is intended to provide information that can support English teaching, particularly reading instruction.

Research Questions

1. How is the reading comprehension of tenth-grade students at SMA Ekasakti Padang in understanding explanation text?
2. What problems do the students face in comprehending explanation text?

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension refers to the process of constructing meaning from written language. Brown (2004) explains that reading assessment involves understanding the relationship between language, meaning, and the reader's ability to process written information. In classroom reading, comprehension can involve identifying explicit information, understanding vocabulary, recognizing main ideas, making inferences, and interpreting text organization.

Abidin (2010) emphasizes that reading is an active process; readers do not simply receive information from a text, but use prior knowledge and reading strategies to construct meaning. Burns (1982) similarly describes reading instruction as a process that should help learners develop effective habits and strategies. Furthermore, several studies show that vocabulary mastery correlates strongly with reading comprehension performance (Furqon, 2013; Fitri & Rifaat, 2021; Manihuruk, 2020), indicating that students' comprehension can be influenced by linguistic knowledge, reading strategies, background knowledge, and the characteristics of the text.

Explanation Text

Gerot and Wignell (1994) describe explanation as a genre used to explain the processes involved in the formation or occurrence of phenomena. Anderson and Anderson (2003) also explain that explanation texts are organized to give information about how or why something happens. In the context of this study, students were expected to recognize the major parts of the explanation text and understand the information contained in each part. The thesis operationalized comprehension through five components: title, general statement, explanation or sequence of explanation, conclusion, and main idea. These components were therefore used as the basis for analyzing students' performance.

Students' Reading Difficulties

Students may experience reading difficulties because of limited vocabulary, unfamiliar text organization, difficulty identifying important information, or insufficient reading practice. Nunan (2012) emphasizes learner-centered instruction and the importance of supporting learners' strategies and needs. Gonzalez-Torres and Vargas-Saritama (2025) similarly found that reflective strategies such as reading journals can improve EFL learners' reading engagement and comprehension. The questionnaire in this study was used to identify problems reported by the students themselves.

Metode Penelitian

This study used a descriptive research design. The purpose was to describe students' reading comprehension of explanation text and the problems they experienced rather than to test the effect of an instructional treatment. The research was conducted at SMA Ekasakti Padang.

Participants

The participants were 10 students from the tenth grade of Social Science at SMA Ekasakti Padang. The sample size was limited to the students included in the research context described in the thesis.

Because the study involved one class and a small number of participants, the findings are descriptive and should not be generalized to all senior high school students.

Instruments

The main instrument was a 20-item multiple-choice reading comprehension test. Students were given 60 minutes to complete the test. The items represented five components of explanation-text comprehension: title (5 items), general statement (6 items), explanation/sequence of explanation (4 items), conclusion (2 items), and main idea (3 items). A questionnaire was also used to identify problems encountered by students while comprehending the text.

Data Analysis

The students' scores were analyzed descriptively. The mean score for each component was calculated to show the level of comprehension. The study used the following interpretation criteria: 81–100 = Excellent; 61–80 = Good; 41–60 = Fair; 21–40 = Low; below 20 = Failed.

Table 1. The students' scores were analyzed descriptively

Category	Score Range
Excellent	81–100
Good	61–80
Fair	41–60
Low	21–40
Failed	Below 20

Results and Discussion

Overall Reading Comprehension

The individual overall scores obtained by the ten students were 85, 80, 70, 90, 35, 85, 95, 50, 45, and 80. The mean score was 71.5. Based on the interpretation criteria used in the thesis, the overall reading comprehension was categorized as Good.

Table 2. Overall reading comprehension scores of the ten students

Student	Score	Category
1	85	Excellent
2	80	Good
3	70	Good
4	90	Excellent
5	35	Low
6	85	Excellent
7	95	Excellent
8	50	Fair
9	45	Fair
10	80	Good

The distribution shows that four students (40%) were in the Excellent category, three students (30%) were in the Good category, two students (20%) were in the Fair category, and one student (10%)

was in the Low category. No student was classified as Failed. The overall result therefore indicates variation among students even though the class mean was in the Good category.

Performance by Comprehension Component

Tabel 3. Mean score by comprehension component

Component	Items	Mean	Category
Title	5	60.0	Fair
General Statement	6	63.3	Good
Explanation/Sequence	4	80.0	Good
Conclusion	2	95.0	Excellent
Main Idea	3	80.0	Good

The highest mean was found in the conclusion component (95.0), categorized as Excellent. Explanation/sequence and main idea both obtained a mean of 80.0 and were categorized as Good. General statement obtained 63.3, also Good, while title obtained 60.0, categorized as Fair.

The thesis also reported the percentage of students in each category for each component. For title, 40% were Excellent, 20% Good, 20% Fair, 10% Low, and 10% Failed. The same distribution occurred for general statement. For explanation/sequence, 40% were Excellent, 40% Good, and 20% Fair. For conclusion, 90% were Excellent and 10% Fair. For main idea, 60% were Excellent, 20% Good, and 20% Low.

Tabel 4. Percentage distribution of students by category for each component

Component	Excellent	Good	Fair	Low	Failed
Title	40%	20%	20%	10%	10%
General Statement	40%	20%	20%	10%	10%
Explanation	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%
Conclusion	90%	0%	10%	0%	0%
Main Idea	60%	20%	0%	20%	0%

The reported 54% Excellent figure in the thesis represents the average of the Excellent percentages across the five components: $(40\% + 40\% + 40\% + 90\% + 60\%) / 5 = 54\%$. It should not be interpreted as the percentage of students who achieved an Excellent overall test score.

Students' Reported Problems

The questionnaire identified three major problems experienced by students in comprehending explanation text:

- Difficulty reading the explanation text thoroughly.
- Limited vocabulary mastery.
- Difficulty determining the general statement.

Discussion

The overall mean score of 71.5 indicates that the students' reading comprehension was in the Good category according to the criteria used in the thesis. However, the component-level results show that

comprehension was not equally strong across all aspects of explanation text. This is important because a satisfactory overall score can still coexist with particular areas of difficulty.

The conclusion component produced the highest mean score, 95.0. This suggests that most students were able to understand or identify concluding information in the text. One possible instructional implication is that students may find information easier to process when it is presented after the sequence of explanation has been established. The result, however, should be interpreted descriptively rather than as evidence of a causal factor.

The explanation/sequence component and main idea both obtained a mean of 80.0. Students generally performed well in following the explanatory process and identifying the central idea. Main-idea identification is important because it requires students to distinguish the central message from supporting details. The relatively strong result suggests that many students had developed this basic comprehension ability.

The general statement component obtained a mean of 63.3. This result is still categorized as Good, but it is lower than the results for explanation, conclusion, and main idea. The questionnaire finding that students had difficulty determining the general statement is consistent with this component-level performance. Teachers may therefore need to give students more explicit practice in recognizing introductory information and distinguishing it from subsequent explanations.

The title component obtained the lowest mean, 60.0, which was categorized as Fair. Title interpretation can require students to connect a short phrase with the broader content of a text. Students may need practice predicting text content from titles and checking those predictions while reading. Vocabulary limitations may also affect this process when the title contains unfamiliar words.

The questionnaire finding concerning limited vocabulary mastery is relevant to reading comprehension because unfamiliar vocabulary can interrupt the construction of meaning. This is consistent with several studies showing a positive correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension performance (Furqon, 2013; Manihuruk, 2020; Fitri & Rifaat, 2021). When students encounter several unknown words, they may focus heavily on individual words and lose the relationship among sentences or paragraphs. Vocabulary instruction connected to the target genre may therefore help students process explanation texts more efficiently.

The difficulty reading the explanation text thoroughly also indicates the importance of reading strategies. Students can be trained to preview the title, identify the general statement, trace the sequence of explanation, and summarize the conclusion. Graphic organizers can make the organization of explanation text more visible and can help students connect information across paragraphs. Genre-based instruction, as demonstrated by Prakoso, Seriardana, and Adnyani (2021) and Tarigan (2023) in the context of writing explanation text, may also be adapted to strengthen students' awareness of the genre's structure when reading.

The findings are generally consistent with the broader literature, which recognizes reading comprehension as an active process and highlights the importance of strategy use, vocabulary, and text organization (Hamra & Syatriana, 2010; Gonzalez-Torres & Vargas-Saritama, 2025). Nevertheless, the present study involved only ten students in one school. Therefore, its results should be viewed as a description of this particular research context rather than as a general statement about all tenth-grade students.

Conclusion

This study found that the tenth-grade students' overall reading comprehension of explanation text at SMA Ekasakti Padang was categorized as Good, with a mean score of 71.5. At the component level, conclusion was the strongest component with a mean of 95.0 and an Excellent category. Explanation/sequence and main idea each obtained 80.0 and were categorized as Good. General statement obtained 63.3 and was also categorized as Good, while title obtained 60.0 and was categorized as Fair.

The questionnaire showed three main difficulties: reading the explanation text thoroughly, limited vocabulary mastery, and determining the general statement. These findings suggest that reading instruction should not focus only on final scores but also on specific comprehension processes and text components.

Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions

1. Teachers can explicitly teach the generic structure of explanation text and help students recognize the function of each part.
2. Vocabulary activities can be integrated before and during reading, especially for words that are central to the explanation.
3. Students can practice identifying the general statement and main idea through guided questions and graphic organizers.
4. Repeated reading can be used with different purposes, such as identifying the topic, locating details, tracing a process, and summarizing the conclusion.
5. Students who show lower comprehension can receive additional guided practice and differentiated support.

For future research, a larger sample involving several classes or schools could provide a broader description of students' reading comprehension. Further studies could also investigate instructional interventions designed to improve vocabulary, structural awareness, and strategic reading of explanation text.

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