

## Reading Comprehension Learning for Deaf Students

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### Abstract

The background of this research is the difficulties faced by deaf students in reading comprehension learning. This research aims to describe the learning process of reading comprehension for deaf students. The method used in this research is a descriptive-qualitative method. The subjects in this research are teachers in Special Education School at Bantul District, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The data collecting techniques in this study are observation and interview. This research focuses on the learning strategies used by teachers related to the material, methods and media in reading comprehension learning. The findings of this research were the learning materials taught were referring to curriculum 2013 and were adjusted to students' ability. The learning method used was speech and question-answer with the total communication approach. Learning media used by teachers was picture media. The use of media and the appropriate method is needed by the teacher to facilitate students in reading comprehension learning.

**Keywords** : learning, reading comprehension, deaf

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### Introduction

A learning process is one of the essential components to achieve the goals in learning. The learning can be understood as the aid given by teachers to gain knowledge and to build characters of students (Susanto, 2013). One of the learning activities in the school is learning to read. Reading is an activity to directly build meaning using information from the reading and to relate information in the text with the experience of readers (Abidin, Mulyati & Hana, 2018). Reading activity can be used to improve the thoughts, knowledge, experiences and ideas of the readers.

Reading ability related to understanding the meaning or the content of a text is called as the reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is one of the most complex activities of human to break the sentence and discover the meaning in the sentence (Kendeou et al., 2016). Reading comprehension as the process which is more active where the readers use information in the text given to create the separated meaning (Hassanein, 2016). For children who do not experience obstacle can easily read and understand the purpose of the text. However, it will be very difficult for the deaf children to do so (Budiharso, 2018).

Deaf can be defined as a condition of losing the hearing which causes someone unable to response the stimulus in the form of audio (Harry, Bunga & Kiling, 2015). The losing of hearing experienced by students causes the difficulty in receiving auditory stimulus. Subsequently, when getting involved in the daily communication, deaf students frequently experience misperception. It occurs because they lose their hearing function then causing the lack of informatoon accepted from their surroundings.

One of the biggest problems related to deaf children is the difficulty in reading (Johnson, 2017). The deaf children are able to read fluently but they cannot perfectly comprehend the information in the passage. One of the ways which can be conducted to discover information is by reading and understanding the meaning from what is read. The reading ability is not only the ability to read the text and mention verbal words, but also it contains the ability to comprehend the information with the cognitive process. Tarigan (2015) opined that reading is a process conducted by readers to obtain messages which want to be delivered by the authors through the written media.

Reading ability is needed to the development of students. Students with the hearing problem frequently experience the retardation in reading comprehension. It is related to the communication skill and the ability to comprehend the information, although those skills are not well developed (Rezaei et al., 2016; Fauzan, 2017). Deaf students can read the written sentence, yet they cannot understand the meaning or the message from the sentences. Kyle & Cain (2015) stated that the reading ability of deaf students is alike with the students who have low understanding level. The ability of reading comprehension will be needed to explore the communication skill of deaf students so they can adapt with their environment.

The reading ability aims to understand the meaning of the reading. The understanding in reading can occur when the readers can answer the questions related to the reading implicitly or explicitly. It becomes problems for deaf students especially in understanding the passage because their language experiences are fewer than normal students. There are some factors which can affect the process of reading comprehension namely environment, intelligence, psychological factor, and physiological factor (Haryanto et al., 2020; Somadyo, 2011). Those factors can affect deaf students in the process of reading comprehension. The supporting factors in the process of reading comprehension in order to elevate the interest and motivation of students in reading are totally needed. In the reading comprehension, there are some ways in the method to deliver learning materials to students with special needs. Deaf students at school need more time to comprehend the passage because they have limited language capability. Whereas, reading comprehension not only demands students to read the passage well but also requires students to comprehend the meaning of the text. It makes the learning process of deaf students disturbed because they need longer time to achieve the information and understand every word spoken by teacher. Because deaf students have problems in acquiring the language caused by no auditory stimulus, the process of reading comprehension learning in the class needs to notice some aspects such as learning materials, learning media, and learning method.

Based on the observation in a Special Education School in Bantul District, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, there is a teacher who teaches deaf students in fifth grade of elementary school. The teacher teaches three deaf students with different abilities. The reading comprehension learning

delivered by teachers is adjusted to curriculum 2013. However, there are deaf students who still experience the difficulty in reading comprehension. To simplify deaf students in understanding the reading texts conveyed by the teacher, it is necessary to have companions during the reading comprehension process. The supporting strategies are in the form of materials, media and learning methods that are adapted to the abilities of deaf students. This research aims to find out and describe the implementation of reading comprehension learning in Special Education School related to learning materials, methods and media applied at the school.

### Method

This research uses a qualitative approach. This research is a descriptive research. A descriptive-qualitative research is aimed to describe some occurrences, whether they are natural or artificial by considering characteristics, quality, and the relation among activities (Sukmadinata, 2011). The researcher implements a qualitative-descriptive research method to describe the implementation of reading comprehension learning in deaf students which is related to learning materials, learning methods, and learning media used by teachers in the learning process of reading comprehension.

This research was conducted in one of Special Education Schools at Bantul District, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The subject of this research was the teacher who taught deaf students in the fifth grade. This research was conducted on October 2019. The data collection techniques used were observation and interview with teachers. The observation was conducted by researchers to observe the activity of reading comprehension learning at the school. The interview was directly used to ask teachers about the implementation of reading comprehension learning in deaf students. The data analysis technique used in this research was descriptive-qualitative analysis technique. Therefore, some steps implemented in this research were data collection, data reduction, data display and conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 2014).

### Results and Discussion

The results obtained in this study were the findings that answered the research questions namely how the learning process of reading comprehension covers learning materials, methods and media in deaf students in fifth grade of Special Education School. To make all information to be

obtained can be easily collected, the researchers conducted interviews with the class teacher and made observations starting from the initial activities, core activities and the final activities in learning and the main observations of the material, methods and media in the reading comprehension learning. The observations were made to see the learning process that was ongoing so that it would be more visible how the teacher conveyed the reading comprehension learning to deaf students. The following were the findings obtained after conducting interviews and observations.

The first findings were about the reading comprehension learning material in deaf students. Teachers used the 2013 curriculum as a reference for material standards that were in accordance with the Core Competencies (KI) and Basic Competencies (KD). The 2013 curriculum is a curriculum that is applied in Indonesia that requires the learning process to be done thematically and students learn several subjects (Suharno, 2015). In the learning process of reading comprehension, teachers selected simple reading texts in the 2013 curriculum textbook. The selected reading comprehension learning material should be adjusted to the abilities of the deaf students. It is in line as what was conveyed by Nizar & Hasibuan (2018) that a teacher must be able to determine precisely the material that is relevant to the needs and abilities of students. Related to the learning material for reading comprehension, teachers should also select passages that were adapted to the abilities of deaf students. Nurgiantoro (2013) stated that the selection of the passages should notice the level of the ability of students and the level of the difficulty of the text. The contents and scope of the reading affected the level of the difficulty of the text. The text will be easily understood if it relates to students' interests and needs. In addition, the level of reading difficulty is closely related to the ability of the readers. If students have difficulty in understanding the reading material, it indicates that students do not have description on the passage that they read. Therefore, the teachers initially convey easier materials to deaf students. The material presented was the simplest material, namely the animal theme in my environment in accordance with thematic textbooks. Starting from the title, then the teacher explains the purpose of the story's title. After that the teacher continues to read the text of the story and explain the purpose of the sentences.

Generally, the teacher said that the selection of learning materials was adjusted to the condition of students who were deaf. So the material given must be the learning material that is easy for students to understand. The material delivered by the teacher on the reading comprehension learning consists of 9-12 short sentences in the language that is easy to understand. The passages used were taken from student textbooks. The material delivered to students must be in accordance with the experiences of students, the teacher must look for texts that can truly represent the experience of students. Material that is appropriate to the experience of students will make students easier to understand the learning material and remember it. So that the teacher will more easily teach the students. This is in line with what is conveyed by Vicic (2011) that If a teacher uses textbooks that are available in learning, the teacher can manage the selection of grammars, vocabularies, skills, functions, and other aspects to develop reading text material that is suitable to the needs and abilities of students.

The second finding was in the learning method used by teachers in conveying the materials regarding reading comprehension. The learning method is a method or stage used to interact between teacher and student in order to achieve learning goals that have been set in accordance with the material and mechanism of learning method (Afandi, Chamalah & Oktarina, 2013). The learning method used by teachers in reading comprehension activities is the lecturing method and the question and answer method. According to Mukrimah (2014), the lecture learning method is an explanation of learning material that is delivered orally to students to achieve the learning objectives that have been set. Subsequently, the teacher reads and explains the reading text that is being discussed in class. Then the deaf student is asked to independently repeat reading the passage that has been explained and read by the teacher. After students finish reading then the teacher asks which parts are not clear then the teacher explains the words that are still difficult for students to understand. If there are still students who do not know the meaning of the reading that has been explained verbally then the teacher will draw it on the board to further clarify students' understanding. The teacher also tries to remind students of the meanings of the passage connected with their experiences. Therefore, students will recall the meaning of language that has been mastered by them. After that the teacher asks students verbally about the point and important things contained in

the reading. The teacher uses the question and answer method by asking students one by one and asking students to answer questions related to the contents of passage. Question and answer method is one of the learning methods that is done by giving questions that encourage students to understand the learning material in order to achieve the learning objectives that have been set (Darmadi, 2017). After all students answer questions from the teacher, then the teacher writes the questions on the board and asks students with hearing impairment to answer them in each book of the deaf students. As what is delivered by Gunawan (2016), to assess reading comprehension skills can be done in two ways. First, retelling the contents of the reading that has been read by making a summary of the contents of the story. Second, it was conducted by answering questions related to the content of the passage.

The explanation of the reading comprehension learning was delivered by the teacher using clear and simple language. This simple language was related to the words used by the teacher, the words that were easily understood by students. In addition to the lecturing method and the question and answer method, the teacher also used a total communication approach during the learning process. Total communication is a combination between spoken language and sign language. Total communication is an approach in education for deaf students which utilizes various forms of communication media, namely oral, aural and manual that are adjusted to the needs of students (Rofiandaru, 2013). Therefore, by the implementation of total communication, the ability of deaf students to understand reading can be increased.

The third finding was about the learning media, as it is known, the role of media in the learning process is very essential to ease students in understanding the difficult learning materials. According to Fadlillah (2014), learning media is a tool that serves to convey information to students. The accuracy of the media used by teachers in the learning process will further enhance students' understanding. The media used by teachers were the drawing and whiteboard media. The teacher distributes the text with pictures to help deaf students understand the contents of passage. After that, the teacher explained the contents of the passage to the deaf students. In explaining the contents of the passage, the teacher also used a blackboard to describe words that were still difficult for students. However, there were still some deaf

students who did not understand the contents of the passage. When being asked about the use of media in the learning process, the teacher answered "because it focuses more on aspects of reading so that it does not require media and it is more emphasized on the text read by students rather than on the images. During the learning process of reading comprehension, the teacher also rarely used the aid of images". In teaching reading comprehension, the teacher did not always use media, it will only be used when deaf students have difficulty in understanding the text. The use of learning media must be made as attractive as possible in order to attract the attention of deaf students. One of the media that attracts deaf students is visual media. According to Fajrin & Hernawati (2018), deaf students tend to be more interested in images along the learning process. Coloured images can attract students' attention when studying. The attention of deaf students in the learning process will make them easily to accept the learning material delivered by teachers.

As seen from the condition of such deaf students, the teacher also encountered problems to make students able to follow the lessons well. The needs to adapt the learning materials, media and methods in learning will be able to support students' ability to receive the lessons and practice their reading comprehension skills well.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings, the authors can draw some conclusions about the reading comprehension learning in the students of fifth grade in one of the Special Education Schools at Bantul District, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The reading comprehension learning for deaf students used learning materials that were adapted to the 2013 curriculum students' textbook. In addition, the selection of reading texts was also adapted to the abilities of deaf students with short passages and used simple language. The methods used in the learning process were still less varied, namely by using lecturing and question and answer method. In the process of delivering the reading comprehension learning, the teacher used the total communication approach to make students easier to understand the meaning contained in the text. The instructional media used by teachers were limited to the text and blackboard only. The use of other media that supported students' understanding such as coloured pictures is still minimal. Therefore, there was a need for media and learning methods that were suitable for the needs of the deaf



students to facilitate deaf students in reading comprehension learning.

In the process of the study, there were many limitations experienced by researchers. These limitations included the limitation of time, the limitation of subjects in the study and the limitation of the problems that were studied. In the further studies, researchers suggest that the research on the reading comprehension learning in deaf students should be broaden the further findings as new knowledge will continue to be developed. Besides that, the next researchers are expected to have some innovations related to the theories about the learning of reading comprehension.

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