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An Analysis Of Second-Semester Economic Management Students' Difficulties In English Reading Comprehension At Batanghari University Jambi

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the reading comprehension difficulties experienced by second-semester Economic Management students at Batanghari University Jambi, identify the most difficult reading comprehension components, and explore the factors influencing these difficulties. This study employed a qualitative ethnographic design. Data were collected through a reading comprehension test consists of 30 multiple-choice items and a questionnaire consists of 30 item. The sample consisted of 16 students. The questionnaire was administered using Google Forms. The instruments focused on five reading comprehension components: vocabulary understanding, identifying main ideas, making inferences, identifying references, and finding specific The findings revealed that vocabulary understanding, identifying main ideas, and making inferences were the most difficult reading comprehension components. The questionnaire results showed that 56.3% of the students experienced difficulties in understanding vocabulary and frequently relied on dictionaries when reading English texts. Meanwhile, the reading comprehension test indicated an average score of 83.81, which was categorized as good. This study concludes that although students achieved a good average score on the reading comprehension test, they still experienced difficulties in understanding vocabulary, identifying main ideas, making inferences, recognizing references, and locating specific information in English academic texts. Vocabulary and inference were found to be the most challenging components of reading comprehension. The findings of this study are expected to provide useful insights for improving English reading instruction, particularly in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses for Economic Management students..

Keywords:
Ethnomathematics, Traditional bekel ball game, Multiplication learning, Elementary school.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is often considered a core competency in learning English, especially at the university level where students routinely work with academic materials. In this sense, comprehension is more than recognizing written words—it involves building meaning by connecting what is written to prior knowledge and using cognitive strategies during reading. Snow

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(2002) describes reading comprehension as an active process of deriving and constructing meaning through engagement with written language.

For students in the Faculty of Economics, this skill becomes even more essential. A large portion of economics-related academic resources—such as textbooks, journal articles, financial statements, policy reports, and analytical reviews—are commonly published in English. Consequently, students' academic growth and performance can be strongly affected by their ability to understand English texts. Grabe (2009) also notes that academic reading demands advanced abilities, including processing complex sentences, recognizing arguments, and evaluating information critically.

However, in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, many university learners face persistent barriers to comprehension. The challenges go beyond unfamiliar vocabulary and often include difficulty determining main ideas, interpreting supporting points, drawing conclusions from implicit information, and dealing with complicated grammar. Nation (2001) highlights vocabulary limitation as one of the most influential factors behind comprehension failure, particularly when students read academic texts filled with technical terms and dense information.

These problems often intensify when students read English for Specific Purposes (ESP) materials. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) explain that ESP texts differ from general English because they contain specialized terminology, distinctive discourse patterns, and field-specific communicative aims. In economics and business contexts, texts frequently present abstract concepts, discipline-based vocabulary, and formal argumentative writing, which can overwhelm learners even if they have basic English proficiency.

Second -semester students are an important group to examine because this stage typically marks a transition toward more intensive academic engagement. Yet, many non-English majors still depend heavily on word-by-word translation, which tends to slow them down and leads to shallow understanding rather than meaningful comprehension (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). When students read this way, they often miss key ideas, struggle to infer meaning, and find it difficult to interact critically with the text.

Research also suggests that reading difficulties usually come from multiple interacting causes. These may include limited language knowledge (vocabulary and grammar), weak cognitive skills (such as inferencing and strategic reading), and insufficient background knowledge related to the topic (Alderson, 2000). When these factors combine, students can experience cognitive overload, which reduces both comprehension and motivation to read academic English texts.

Although English reading comprehension is clearly important for economics students, relatively few studies have explored these difficulties through an ethnographic perspective, particularly among undergraduate students in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts. Most previous studies have focused on measuring reading performance or identifying specific linguistic problems through quantitative methods. Such approaches often provide limited understanding of how students actually experience reading difficulties within their everyday learning environment. Therefore, an ethnographic investigation is needed to examine not only the types of reading comprehension difficulties encountered by students but also how these difficulties are manifested through their reading behaviors, classroom interactions, learning practices, and responses to academic reading tasks. By exploring students' experiences in their natural learning context, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the factors influencing reading comprehension difficulties and to contribute to the improvement of ESP reading instruction for Management students.

In the context of the Management Study Program at Batanghari University Jambi, second-semester students are required to engage with English academic texts related to economics and management. However, many students still encounter difficulties in understanding vocabulary, identifying main ideas, comprehending supporting details, making inferences, and interpreting complex

grammatical structures. These difficulties are often reflected in students' classroom behaviors, such as dependence on translation, hesitation during reading activities, limited participation in discussions, and challenges in responding to comprehension tasks. Despite the importance of reading comprehension in academic success, there remains limited ethnographic research that investigates how Management students experience and respond to these difficulties within their actual learning environment. Therefore, this study is conducted under the title "An Analysis of Second-Semester Economic Management Students' Difficulties in English Reading Comprehension at Batanghari University Jambi."

This study employs a qualitative ethnographic approach to explore students' reading comprehension difficulties within their natural classroom setting. The research seeks to understand students' reading experiences, learning behaviors, interaction patterns, and strategies used when engaging with English academic texts. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for improving English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction and supporting students' academic reading development This research was apply a qualitative ethnographic approach to identify and understand students' reading comprehension difficulties within their natural learning environment.".

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative ethnographic research design to investigate the difficulties experienced by second-semester Management students in English reading comprehension within the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at Batanghari University Jambi. Ethnography is a qualitative research approach that aims to explore, describe, and interpret the behaviors, experiences, interactions, beliefs, and learning culture of a particular group in its natural setting (Creswell, 2014). In educational research, ethnography is commonly used to understand how students behave, interact, and construct meaning during learning activities within specific classroom and academic environments.

In the context of ESP learning, reading comprehension involves more than understanding vocabulary and sentence meaning. An additional reason for selecting an ethnographic approach is the researcher's direct involvement as the English lecturer of the participants. Throughout the teaching and learning process, the researcher has continuously observed students' reading behaviors, participation patterns, responses to reading activities, and challenges encountered when dealing with English academic texts. These observations were conducted naturally in the classroom setting and provided valuable insights into students' actual learning experiences. The prolonged engagement between the researcher and the participants enabled the identification of recurring patterns of reading comprehension difficulties that might not be fully captured through tests and questionnaires alone.

The data in this study are collected through several qualitative techniques, including classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, field notes, and documentation. Classroom observation is conducted to examine students' behaviors and interactions during reading activities. Interviews are used to explore students' perceptions, feelings, and experiences related to reading comprehension difficulties. Field notes are used to record important events, classroom situations, and interaction patterns observed during the research process. Meanwhile, documentation such as students' assignments, reading materials, and classroom learning documents are used to support and strengthen the findings.

Instrument of the Research

Test

The primary instrument used in this study is a reading comprehension test, which serves as an objective measure of students' reading ability.

The test consists of 30 multiple-choice items, each with four options (A, B, C, and D), and only one correct answer. The distribution of items across these components is balanced to ensure that each aspect is adequately measured. The test is designed to provide quantitative data that reflect students' actual reading performance.

Questioner

The questionnaire consists of 30 statements developed based on the same five components used in the test. Each item is measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree,3 = Doubtful,4 = Agree,5 = Strongly Agree

Table 1 Specification of The Test

No	Reading Component	Indicator	Item Numbers	Total Items
	Specific Information	Identifying explicit information, facts, and details stated in the text	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 19, 20	9
	Vocabulary Understanding	Determining the meaning of words and academic terms based on context	8, 9, 10, 28, 29, 30	6
	Identifying Main Idea	Identifying the central idea of a paragraph or text	11, 12, 13	3
	Making Inference	Drawing logical conclusions and understanding implied meaning	14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24	9
	Identifying Reference	Identifying the referents of pronouns and other reference words in the text	25, 26, 27	3
Total			**1–30**	**30**

Source: Adapted from Harris and Hodges (1995), Nation (2001), Kintsch (1998), and Grabe (2009).

The questionnaire results indicated that students experienced difficulties in several aspects of reading comprehension. Several students indicated that they frequently relied on dictionaries and translation strategies when reading English texts. Difficulties in understanding implied meanings and connecting information across different parts of a text were also identified. These findings suggest that reading comprehension difficulties among the participants were influenced by both linguistic factors and reading strategies.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the reading comprehension difficulties experienced by second-semester Economic Management students in an ESP context. The findings indicated that students encountered difficulties in several reading comprehension components, particularly vocabulary

understanding, identifying main ideas, and making inferences. Although the reading comprehension test showed a good average score, the questionnaire results revealed that many students still experienced challenges when reading English academic texts.

Vocabulary was identified as one of the most significant difficulties. Many students reported problems understanding unfamiliar words, academic vocabulary, and economics-related terminology. They also relied heavily on dictionaries and translation strategies when reading English texts. These findings are consistent with Nation (2001), who emphasized that vocabulary knowledge is a fundamental factor influencing reading comprehension. Similarly, Fitriani (2020) found that ESP students often struggle with discipline-specific vocabulary, which affects their ability to comprehend academic texts.

Another difficulty involved identifying main ideas, particularly when the central message was implied rather than explicitly stated. Students also experienced challenges distinguishing main ideas from supporting details. This finding suggests that students need stronger skills in organizing information and recognizing key concepts within academic text

The findings further revealed difficulties in making inferences. Many students struggled to interpret implied meanings, draw conclusions, and connect information presented across different parts of a text. This finding supports Kintsch (1998), who argued that inference-making is essential for constructing meaning beyond explicitly stated information. Difficulties in this area may limit students' ability to engage critically with academic reading materials.

The survey results showed that students struggled with many reading comprehension elements, including vocabulary knowledge, main idea identification, detailed information comprehension, inference generation, reference identification, academic text understanding, and application of reading techniques. Although many stuents' said they had favorable views of their reading level, certain poll questions suggested that some still struggled with English books—especially those pertaining to economics and management. These results show that some kids still struggle with reading comprehension even if they are generally confident in reading activities.

A reading comprehension test was given to the same 16 Students in order to help me to better understand these challenges. The test sought to assess students' actual reading level and find if their perceptions matched their reading comprehension level. Students' scores varied from 29 to 96, with a mean score of 83.81, according to test results. Most Students performed quite well, pointing to a usually good degree of reading comprehension. Six students (37.5%) got the best grade of 96; three got 93; one got 90. Meanwhile, a number of students got scores between 66 and 73; one other student got the lowest score of 29.

From an ethnographic angle, these score differences show variations in students' reading habits, vocabulary knowledge, language skill, reading techniques, and learning experiences. Together with test results, questionnaire results show that although most pupils showed acceptable reading level, some still struggled—especially with interpreting implied information, understanding academic vocabulary, and grasping thorough information inside English texts.

From an ethnographic perspective, the findings suggest that students' reading comprehension difficulties are closely related to their reading habits and learning practices. Many students tended to focus on translating individual words rather than constructing overall meaning from the text. Their dependence on dictionaries, limited exposure to academic reading materials, and lack of confidence when dealing with discipline-specific vocabulary influenced their reading performance.

The questionnaire results indicated a moderate level of reading comprehension difficulty (M = 3.12), while the reading comprehension test showed a good average score (M = 83.81). These findings suggest that students still experienced reading difficulties despite demonstrating satisfactory reading performance. Together with test results, questionnaire results show that although most students' showed acceptable reading level, some still struggled—especially with interpreting

implied information, understanding academic vocabulary, and grasping thorough information inside English texts

From an ethnographic perspective, the findings indicate that students' reading comprehension difficulties were influenced not only by linguistic factors but also by reading habits, learning experiences, confidence, and exposure to academic texts. Students frequently relied on translation and dictionary use, which affected their ability to identify main ideas, make inferences, and construct overall meaning from academic reading materials. Overall, the findings indicate that reading comprehension difficulties among Economic Management students are influenced by both linguistic and behavioral factors. Therefore, improving vocabulary mastery, inferential reading skills, and exposure to English academic texts is essential for strengthening reading comprehension in ESP learning contexts

CONCLUSION

This research focused on exploring the challenges related to reading comprehension faced by Management students in their second semester at Batanghari University Jambi. From the analysis of the reading comprehension Questioner given by the researcher on the google form, and test, it was determined that students struggled with multiple aspects of reading comprehension, such as understanding vocabulary, pinpointing main ideas, drawing inferences, recognizing references, and retrieving specific details. These obstacles hindered their capability to grasp English academic texts associated with economics and management.

Among the various reading elements studied, vocabulary was pinpointed as one of the most difficult areas. Numerous students indicated they had trouble with unfamiliar words and specialized terminology linked to economics and management. Furthermore, learners encountered difficulties when it came to identifying key ideas and making inferences, especially when the text contained implied meanings rather than direct statements. These challenges restricted their capacity to interpret and comprehend the overall significance of academic reading content.

The examination also highlighted that students' challenges in reading comprehension were affected by several factors, including a limited vocabulary base, reliance on dictionaries and translation tactics, unfamiliarity with academic texts, and a restricted ability to connect concepts within a text. These elements diminished students' self-assurance and effectiveness when engaging with English academic resources.

In summary, the results suggest that enhancing vocabulary skills, fostering inferential reading abilities, and broadening students' exposure to academic reading content are critical steps to improve reading comprehension for Management students in English for Specific Purposes contexts. This research is anticipated to aid in the enhancement of English reading instruction practices at Batanghari. University Jambi.

The findings indicate that students' reading comprehension difficulties were closely related to their reading habits and learning practices. During reading activities, students frequently relied on translation and dictionary use when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary. Many students focused on understanding individual words rather than constructing meaning from the text as a whole. These reading behaviors influenced their ability to identify main ideas, make inferences, and interpret academic texts effectively.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that students' interaction with English academic texts was shaped by limited exposure to academic reading materials and a lack of confidence when dealing with discipline-specific vocabulary. These classroom reading practices provide important insights into how reading comprehension difficulties are experienced by Economic Management students in an ESP context

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