

**PROBLEMS FACED BY THE FOURTH YEAR STUDENTS OF
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF STATE UNIVERSITY OF
PADANG IN MAKING INFERENCE IN READING**

THESIS

Submitted as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement of Strata One (S1) Degree



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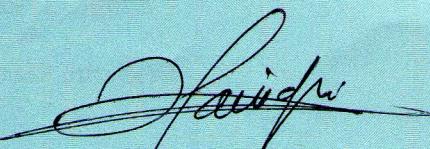
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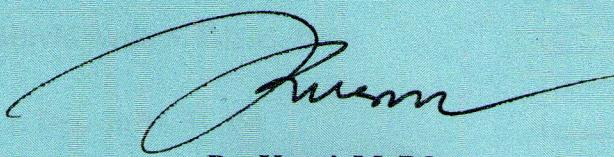


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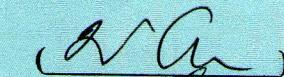
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ABSTRAK

Iswar, Indah Nindia. 2011. Problems Faced by The Fourth Year Students of English Department of State University of Padang in Making Inference in Reading. Unpublished Thesis. Padang: Universitas Negeri Padang.

Making inference adalah salah satu *reading subskills* yang sangat penting dalam proses pemahaman dalam membaca. Oleh karena itu *reading subskill* ini dipelajari oleh mahasiswa bahasa Inggris Univeritas Negeri Padang dalam kuliah *Reading*. Namun, masih banyak mahasiswa yang belum mampu menerapkan *making inference skill* ini dengan baik.

Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif dengan populasi penelitian mahasiswa bahasa Inggris UNP tahun akademik 2007. Sampel ditetapkan dengan menerapkan teknik random sampling dengan jumlah sampel 15% dari populasi karena jumlah populasi sangat banyak. Instrumen yang digunakan adalah *reading test* dan *interview*.

Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa pada umumnya mahasiswa tersebut memiliki kemampuan yang rendah dalam menerapkan *making inference skill* (45.29%). Data wawancara mengungkapkan bahwa masalah yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa adalah pemahaman yang rendah tentang konsep *making inference skill*. Selain itu, mahasiswa-mahasiswa tersebut menghadapi masalah yang lain, seperti: kosa kata yang terbatas, pengetahuan yang kurang, rendahnya minat baca, pemahaman terhadap bacaan yang kurang, ketidak mampuan dalam menemukan dan memanfaatkan *clue* pada teks, serta kurangnya latihan.

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The last, it is hoped that this thesis can be useful for readers. Also, it is hoped that this thesis can be useful for English Department students and people who are interested in this topic.

Padang, January 2011

Indah Nindia Iswar

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

Reading skill is considered as an essential skill in learning English. Being skillful in reading will enable students to make greater progress and development in academic field. In addition, the reading skill is one of the requirements to be successful not only in academic life, but also in the work field since most information and references are written in English.

The English Department of State University of Padang realizes the importance of reading skill. Therefore, it offers reading courses, which consist of Reading 1, Reading 2, Reading 3, and Extensive Reading. The syllabus of each reading course provides students with the lesson and exercise of reading subskills. Reading 1 gives reading exercise intensively. This reading course focuses on some reading subskills, such as using context clues, identifying main idea, identifying topic sentence, and identifying supporting details. Similarly, Reading 2 course trains the students to comprehend a text by using some reading subskills and reading strategies such as: identifying main idea, identifying supporting details, using context clues, and making prediction. Then, Reading 3 trains students to use some reading subskills such as: skimming, scanning, making inference, drawing conclusion. Furthermore, Extensive Reading course educates students to apply critical reading skills, such as: understanding figurative language, making inference, and distinguishing facts and opinion.

In order to reach the goals of reading courses, the students are taught reading skills, such as, identifying topic, identifying main idea, identifying supporting major and minor details, drawing conclusion and making inference. By knowing the concept of the reading skills and how to apply them in reading, the students will be able to comprehend a text well. However, the students are not skillful in reading yet. This phenomenon may be caused by several factors.

The first factor is the students' motivation. Based on the writer's observation in English Department of UNP, there were many students have low motivation in reading. In reading courses, they only did the exercise given by the teacher. In addition, if the teachers asked a question, only a few of them tried to find the answer.

The second factor is the students' vocabulary mastery. There were many students who could not comprehend a text because they did not have enough vocabulary and they did not know how to figure out the meanings of new words they find when they read. Wiener and Bazerman (1985) state that in order to read confidently, the readers need to know many words and they should know how to understand the meanings for new words.

The third factor that influences the students' reading ability is the students' background knowledge. The readers' background knowledge is an important element that determines the students' reading comprehension. In fact, Duffy (2009) states that 50–60% of successful comprehension is tied to background knowledge. Unfortunately, readers could not read well because they still had problems with background knowledge because of the different culture the readers and ability to use prior knowledge. The cultural differences among the readers and the author can result

in misunderstanding. Reading texts in unfamiliar cultural setting can result in difficulty of processing and recalling the information of the texts (Alderson, 2000). In addition, the readers inability in relating the ideas in a text with the prior knowledge of the world makes them unable comprehend the text.

The fourth problem is that students have poor knowledge about the language structure. The knowledge of language structure is essential in reading since it helps the readers to grab the detail information in a text. If the students have poor knowledge about the language structure, they will find difficulties in understanding the sentences in a text. Alderson (2000) states that the students that have good knowledge about language structure, especially the syntactic structure, can get at the core of more complicated sentences.

The fifth factor is the students' knowledge about reading subskills. Many students do not know the concept of reading skills and their functions. In addition, they cannot apply the reading skills although the students have been taught the reading skills. This problem may be caused by lack of exercise.

There are many kinds of reading subskills that are needed for successful reading comprehension, such as: making inference, distinguishing fact and opinion, making prediction, skimming and scanning. One of the reading subskills that are essential in reading is making inference. It is a reading subskill that helps readers to read between the lines. By making inference the readers can comprehend the ideas that are not stated by the author. Additionally, it allows the readers to know the deeper meanings of the text.

Despite the fact the making inference skill is crucial in reading, the students' ability in making inference is poor. Many students could not apply this skill well because they did not understand the function of this skill. As the result, the students cannot comprehend the ideas that are implied by the authors. A recent study shows that the students' knowledge of making inference is low (Amir, 2008). Therefore, we need to identify the students' problems in making inference.

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background of the problem above, the problems that may contribute to the students' success in reading can be identified. The problems may come from the students themselves. The factors from the students may be caused by lack of motivation, vocabulary, background knowledge, and knowledge of language structure. Another problem faced by the students is that the students did not know the concept of reading skills and how to apply the reading skills.

Dealing with the reading skills, the inference-making skill is very important in reading. Nevertheless, there are many students who did not know the concept of this skill. In addition, they could not apply this skill well. As the result, they had poor reading comprehension.

C. Limitation of the Problem

Since reading skills is very essential in reading, this research focused on one of the reading skills, that is, making inference. In this research, the researcher identified the problems faced by the third year of English Department students of

State University of Padang in making inference in reading. Making inference is one of reading subskills. It is the ability to draw conclusion from clues in a text to comprehend implicit information. The inference-making skill consists of several types.

There were four types of inference that was tested in this research: cause/effect, feeling/attitude, author's belief, and author's purpose. The researcher chose only four types of inference since it is difficult to study all types of inference in short time. In addition, the types of inference are very important in reading

D. Formulation of the Problem

The researcher formulated the problem in the following question:

What are the problems faced by the third year students in making inference?

E. Research Questions

1. To what extend are the fourth year students of English Department's ability in making inferences?
2. What are the problems faced by the students in making inference?

F. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to describe the making inference ability and problems faced by the fourth year students of English Department of State University of Padang in making inferences in reading.

G. Significance of The Study

This research was expected to give some contributions theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research was expected to give some knowledge to students about making inference skill. Practically, this research was expected to encourage students to develop their making inference skill. Furthermore, it was expected for educators to emphasize making inference skill lesson in reading course.

H. Definition of Key Term

Making Inference Skill = the ability to draw conclusion from clues in a text to comprehend implicit information.

Inference = a process by which we reach a conclusion based on specific evidence.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

From the results of the study, it can be concluded that the students had problems in making inference. Based on the result of the test, the percentage of average ability of the students' in making inference was less than 60%, that is, 45.29%. Sudjana (1991) suggests that if the students' ability is less than 60%, it is considered that they have poor ability. Hence, it can be interpreted that the students got problems in making inference.

The students' making inference ability was low because they faced some problems in making inference. Most of them did not understand the concept of making inference. They did not know well the definition of making inference, the types of inference, and the steps in making inference. In addition, they seldom generate inferences while reading. They often to accept the stated ideas without trying to comprehend the missing details. Furthermore, the students got some problems in making inference due to lacked of exercise.

There are more problems faced by the students in making inferernce. The following explanation is the problems for each types of inference (cause / effect , feeling / attitude, author's purpose, author's belief:

a. Cause / Effect Inference

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that the students had some problems faced in cause / effect inference. First, the students lacked of vocabulary. Another problem was that the students did not understand the literal meaning of texts. Additionally, the students lacked of background knowledge. Furthermore, the students' reading interest was low.

b. Feeling / Attitude Inference

Based on the findings of this research, it can be interpreted that the students got some problems in feeling / attitude inference several factors. First, the students lacked of vocabulary. Another factor was that the students did not comprehend the literal meaning of the passsages. In addition, the students could not use some clues provided in the texts. Finally, the students' failure in making feeling/attitude inference was caude by lack of practice.

c. Author's Purpose Inference

There were some problems faced by the fourth year students in author's purpose inference. First, the students lacked of vocabulary. In addition, they lacked of background knowledge. Additionally, the students could not use some clues provided in the texts. Furthermore, the students lacked of reading interest.

d. Author's Belief Inference

Based on the findings of this research, most of the students got problems in author's belief inference due to several reasons. First, the students did not comprehend the literal meaning of the texts. Second, most of students lacked of background knowledge. Third, the students had low interest. Fourth, the students lacked of practice.

B. Suggestion

Related to the findings of this study, there are some suggestions proposed for this study.

1. The students have to improve their knowledge about the concepts of making inference and its function. In addition, they have to do more practice in making inference in order to be skillful in making inference.
2. It is suggested for educators of reading course to increase the students' comprehension about making inference. Additionally, it is recommended to give more exercise about making inference to the students of reading courses.
3. For the next researchers, since this study only figured out the ability and problems faced by the students in four types of inference, the next researchers who are also interested in making inference skill to figure out another types of inference.

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