
ANALYZING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION OF NARRATIVE TEXTS IN EFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract

The research uses qualitative methodology to examine how EFL students understand narrative texts in their discourse analysis of reading comprehension. The researcher chose ten tenth-grade Makassar senior high school students for the study through purposive sampling methods. The research data collection process involved tasks for reading activities along with think-aloud protocol sessions and semistructured interview methods. Students' Reading comprehension differed widely according to their ability to understand cohesive devices in context and their capacity for maintaining logical structure and narrative progression. Both high-ability students and their less-proficient peers showed different levels of understanding discourse markers. However, poor performers lacked cohesion skills, which led them to interpret textual segments individually. The research shows that explicit teaching about discourse elements helps students to improve their reading comprehension abilities. The study contributes knowledge relevant to English as a foreign language instruction method while showing that discourse awareness training in reading improves students' understanding of narrative literature.

Keywords: *reading comprehension, narrative texts, discourse analysis, EFL*

Introduction

Experts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching identify reading comprehension as the crucial skill because it helps students build their language abilities while raising their achievements across university subjects. The majority of EFL students encounter difficulties in deep reading comprehension especially when reading extended complex texts such as narrative genres. Students who can break down words and sentences into meaning struggle to establish relationship links between ideas and detect text structures and meaning development across the full reading content. The difficulties faced by students when processing texts require researchers to look more intently at discourse level understanding abilities.

ELF reading comprehension research has adopted discourse elements like cohesion and coherence as essential components for student meaning interpretation according to Villanueva (2022) and Rahimi & Zhang (2021). Students possess better reading abilities when they understand the logical relationships between ideas in texts according to research findings. The research conducted by Al-Khalifa (2020) together with Wu & Pekrun (2019) presented findings regarding how metacognitive strategies and textual awareness impact reading performance. The research explores reading-related mental processes yet its quantitative analysis methods lack the ability to monitor students' complex interaction with discourse features when they read text. The increasing amount of reading comprehension research fails to utilize qualitative methods specifically incorporating discourse analysis when assessing how EFL students interpret narrative passages. Research about reading comprehension usually focuses exclusively on scores and vocabulary understanding while ignoring how readers interact with text features at the discourse level. Current literature fails to investigate student interpretation of narrative structure components such as orientation, complication, and resolution and their usage of cohesive devices.

Both academic understanding and classroom implementation lack sufficient solutions regarding reading comprehension methods within EFL language teaching environments.

This research fills the knowledge gap through an investigation of how EFL students understand narrative texts when analyzing their discourse-level comprehension of cohesion and coherence and narrative structures. The main research inquiry for this study examines the ways EFL classroom students understand the cohesion and coherence, and narrative structure present in narrative texts. The research investigates student methods for handling narrative discourse as well as their encountered difficulties in processing this text type. Discourse analysis serves as this study's main method since researchers employ it for both theoretical analysis and empirical investigation to achieve a deeper understanding of student reading processes. The study adds value to current research through its findings while providing useful recommendations for developing discourse-based reading practices in EFL classrooms.

Research Methodology

The study adopted qualitative methodologies through case study design strategies. The authors selected this design since it enables extensive analysis about student text comprehension during EFL classes regarding cohesion and coherence while studying narratives. This study method suits its purpose because it explores students' reading procedures and meaning construction activities instead of measuring quantitative results.

Purposive sampling produced ten tenth-grade students from a Makassar-based public senior high school to participate in this research. The research aimed for subject diversity based on students' reading skills alongside their school achievement and their ongoing classroom reading participation. The sampling method is designed to produce abundant and applicable data regarding the research objectives.

Three main data collection techniques included reading tasks and think-aloud protocols with semi-structured interviews. The selected narrative texts for the study published at the students' reading level contained distinct narrative structures which were organized as orientation, complication and resolution. The students were instructed to read the text during think-aloud sessions and voice their thoughts for documentation along with transcription for analysis purposes. The students went through interviews to expand their responses about text coherence and cohesion along with their interpretations of particular textual segments. The researcher developed the assessment tools before two experts evaluated them as valid for reading instruction and discourse analysis purposes.

A discourse analysis technique analyzed the transcriptions through categorizing reference, substitution and ellipsis, conjunctions with cohesion patterns while coherence analysis focused on idea logic and narrative structure analysis included orientation, complication and resolution. The methodology included thematic analysis to detect consistent patterns in students' understanding during the study. The data validity process included using triangulation methods to analyze information obtained from both reading activities and think-aloud methods and interview sessions. The research employed Member checking together with audit trails for building credibility and dependability in the findings. The analysis results appeared in a narrative format to deliver an extensive overview of what students comprehended in narrative texts.

Results and Discussion

Results

Understanding of Text Cohesion

Three main data collection techniques included reading tasks and think-aloud protocols with semi-structured interviews. The selected narrative texts for the study published at the students' reading level contained distinct narrative structures which were organized as orientation, complication and resolution. The students were instructed to read the text during think-aloud sessions and voice their thoughts for documentation along with transcription for analysis purposes. The students went through interviews to expand their responses about text coherence and cohesion along with their interpretations of particular textual segments. The researcher developed the

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Table 1. The frequency of cohesive elements identified and correctly understood by students based on think-aloud protocols

Cohesive Devices	Frequency Identified	Number of Students Who Understood Correctly
Reference	52	9 out of 10
Conjunction	37	8 out of 10
Substitution	18	4 out of 10
Ellipsis	11	3 out of 10
Total		

Understanding of Text Coherence

Most students demonstrated effective abilities to link sentences and paragraphs throughout the text structure. Students who demonstrated intermediate to high reading abilities could show the natural/logical connecting of events in text content yet students with lower proficiency limited their reading to physical text information without linking segments.

Understanding of Narrative Structure

Students from every reading proficiency level recognized the three essential narrative elements which include orientation and complication and resolution. The analysis confirms that six students succeeded in explaining directly how the complication generates effects leading to resolution in the narrative. Two students demonstrated partial understanding but three students partially understood while another student failed to correctly identify the resolution part.

Table 2. The frequency of cohesive elements identified and correctly understood by students based on think-aloud protocols

Narrative Structure	Students with Full Understanding	Students with Partial Understanding
Orientation	10	0
Complication	9	1
Resolution	6	4
Total	25	5

Discussion

The analysis from this study presents crucial information about EFL students' abilities to understand narrative texts regarding their use of cohesive devices as well as narrative coherence and structure elements. Most educational learners show they understand how text components link through their identification of cohesive devices such as reference and conjunctions. The more implicit cohesion features in substitution and ellipsis seem to trouble specific students to the point where further instructional efforts should address these challenges. The majority of students showed competencies in text part relations (coherence) yet students with lower reading abilities displayed difficulty uniting text elements demonstrating insufficient higher-level reading abilities.

Every student participating in the analysis recognized the main narrative elements of orientation, complication and resolution within the story. Learners tend to understand narrative elements better due to the familiar storytelling format. Students need direct teaching about logical narrative relationships because they find it challenging to explain how story elements connect to each other.

Research conducted in EFL reading comprehension supports the obtained results. According to Rahmat, et al (2020) EFL students demonstrate ability to understand shallow levels of cohesion yet experience difficulties with advanced cohesive devices. Liu, et al (2014) investigated how discourse feature instruction among students led to increased capability in understanding academic text coherence and structure. The current research extends previous research findings by demonstrating the same reading pattern across narrative text while emphasizing discourse-level literacy proficiency in all genres including accessible texts.

This research shows that incorporating discourse analysis stands vital for reading instruction programs. Teaching students about cohesion and coherence in a direct manner assists them in graduating from basic text comprehension to more sophisticated textual analysis. Reading comprehension requires more than language skills because it is a discourse-oriented process according to this study. Theoretical support exists for teachers to develop discourse-level activities in reading instruction. The analysis of narrative structure aids students in getting better results in reading and writing abilities.

The study provides valuable insights yet its findings are restricted because it works with a small group of study participants at a particular school location. The conclusions from this research rest on ten EFL students from only one classroom that reduces the overall validity of the data findings. The primarily qualitative nature of the collected data makes researcher bias a factor but the research investigators took measures to validate results through triangulation and member checking. Students displayed different levels of protocol competency during think-aloud sessions since some unfamiliarity with the procedure affected their ability to share thorough thoughts when reading the text.

Further research should use bigger diverse test populations from diverse educational levels and geographical areas to boost the findings' general acceptability. Longitudinal research should be performed to understand changes in students' discourse element comprehension when instruction continues throughout time. Additional quantitative analytical methods including comprehension assessment protocols and discourse analysis scoring systems would enhance the complete understanding of the study by supplementing qualitative findings. Research should investigate the effects that active teaching of narrative cohesion and coherence principles would have on narrative comprehension for students.

Conclusion

A discourse analysis approach served to investigate EFL students' comprehension of narrative texts with emphasis on cohesion along with coherence and narrative structure elements. Students demonstrated proficiency in identifying fundamental cohesive devices together with basic elements of narrative structure yet they encountered difficulties when interpreting advanced cohesive forms that establish text segment relationships. Student narrative understanding extends past basic language elements because they need to understand how different textual components function in creating meaning.

This research contributes original knowledge by applying discourse analysis to reading comprehension examination particularly when teaching EFL students narrative texts. The research shows precisely how students perform with cohesion and coherence instruction so teachers and curriculum developers gain valuable knowledge for developing effective discourse-level reading abilities in language education.

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