

Improving Reading Comprehension Skills to Solve Text Problems of Elementary School Students

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Keywords:	Abstract
<p>reading ability; reading skill; text question; student book</p>	<p><i>This study sought to determine the reading comprehension and text problem-solving abilities of sixth-grade elementary students. This research utilized qualitative methodology. Principal, sixth-grade teacher, and two sixth-grade students were the four subjects of this study. In this study, interviews, observation, and documentation were used as data collection methods. In this study, data analysis is performed using an interactive model data analysis technique comprising the steps of data reduction, data presentation, inference, and validation. Moreover, source triangulation was used to ensure the validity of the data in this study. The findings of this study indicate that: (1) sixth-grade students are proficient in reading and comprehension; the average student is nearly able to comprehend the text after reading it; and (2) sixth-grade students are proficient in writing. In order to comprehend the reading, students must first read the text, comprehend its content, and be able to interpret its meaning, with the exception of its implied meaning. On average, however, they were able to draw conclusions from the reading. There were few students whose test scores on text questions were below the Minimum Completeness Criteria score, given the sixth-grade students' average reading comprehension ability.</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

Background

According to Pingge and Wangid (2016), learning difficulties are a group of difficulties manifested in objective difficulties in skills such as the students' abilities when listening, conversing with others, reading, writing, reasoning, and arithmetic. The success of elementary education depends on achieving an educational goal by students and teachers while at school. According to Niswati and Sayekti (2020), by doing suitable learning

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activities, it is hoped that students can improve their critical thinking skills. Education in Indonesia views students who get low learning outcomes as a belief that students have difficulties in learning. Students who have difficulty reading will have a problem at the next grade level. That is why the teacher must select students who are already fluent in reading and those who are not to make some interventions to help the students read and comprehend.

Reading comprehension of reading texts is one of the obstacles in the world of education, especially at the high-grade elementary school level (Kedang & Bani, 2021). This fact must be the focus of a teacher's attention when instructing, as well as a subject for consideration and reflection when implementing learning. Students' reading skills are not only utilized in the learning of Indonesian but in all subjects. Thus, it can be stated that students' reading comprehension skills are extremely beneficial when reading texts and answering questions about reading texts. Reading must be taught at all levels of education so that students can develop their skills, particularly at the elementary school level. Students who are expected to answer text-based questions must have the ability to comprehend what they read (Anwar et al., 2022). Given the importance of reading comprehension skills that students must possess, it is appropriate for teachers to take their teaching seriously and be able to collaborate with students' parents so that students can be taught by teachers at school and by their parents at home.

Problem of Study

Students must be able to comprehend the material they are reading in order for the acquired knowledge to reach the students themselves. According to Kurniawati and Koeswanti (2020), reading is an activity that requires both oral and written reception of the messages and impressions contained in the text. In Indonesia, the reading level of children remains relatively low. Students with proficient reading skills cannot obtain new information and acquire new knowledge that they did not previously possess (Saputri et al., 2019).

The problem in the research field is related to the reading comprehension skills of students, and the teacher is also aware of it. When the teacher assigns the task of reading a text, students are unable to concentrate and instead converse with their peers and make jokes. As a result, students are not proficient readers. When asked to retell the contents of the readings and unable to answer questions from the teacher whose answers are already in the readings, students' comprehension is low because it is influenced by attention, interest, and involvement in reading a passage (Sari et al., 2021). Students' reading skills can be utilised to complete schoolwork effectively. According to Sutawijaya (Laily, 2014), story questions are highly relevant to the students' everyday lives. It is essential to provide students with story questions and problem-solving activities to be solved.

Students can read many books, one of which is a student book that they commonly use to study. According to (Pabriana, 2021), student books can increase students' enthusiasm for learning and stimulate students' minds. The theme book was one of the teaching tools used in elementary schools in Indonesia during the implementation of the thematic learning curriculum in 2013. These books can also assist instructors in facilitating the learning process and in ensuring that all students achieve their learning goals. All of the required reading material is included in the book's theme for the students. It is anticipated that it will help students become more proficient readers because they can use their reading skills to both read and respond to lengthy questions.

Students must take multiple steps to solve problems in textual questions. Students are required to read the text and comprehend its content. However, without guidance from the instructor, students would experience confusion when answering text-based questions. For elementary school students, it is still difficult to solve text-based problems. Students' ability

to solve text-based problems is also contingent on their reading ability. Anwar et al. (2022) conducted a study that demonstrated the effect of students' reading comprehension skills on their ability to solve story-based problems. If students' reading skills are inadequate, their ability to solve story problems will be significantly impaired. In addition, a study by Almadiliana et al. (2021) revealed that the greater the students' reading ability, the simpler it will be for them to solve text problems.

State of the Art

Elementary school students in Indonesia continue to demonstrate below-average reading comprehension skills. This statement is consistent with the findings of Basuki's (2012) study, which demonstrated that fourth-grade students' reading comprehension skills are limited. The essential competencies outlined in content standards do not align with international PIRLS requirements. Inawati and Sanjaya (2018) demonstrated that the fifth-grade public elementary schools in OKU Regency, South Sumatera Province, have moderate and slow reading rates. In addition, Kaniati et al. (2018) found that students' critical thinking abilities are still subpar. It is reflected in the final grade for solving text-based or formative questions. The research conducted by Laily (2014) demonstrated that the ability to read with comprehension is advantageous in mathematics, particularly when answering story questions. Presently, the reading comprehension ability of students remains low..

Students struggle with lengthy questions and text-based questions. Yuwono et al. (2018) demonstrated that at the stage of comprehension, students encounter no difficulties. However, some students encounter difficulties during implementation because they do not read text questions carefully. Magrifah et al. (2019) revealed that transformation errors are caused by multiple factors. The reasons include forgetting formulas, using improper procedures, designing incorrect recipes, inverting formulas, and misinterpreting questions. Students are not accustomed to working with story-based questions.

Gap Study & Objective

Some previous studies have not explicitly examined related topics regarding sixth-grade students' ability to answer book-based story questions. In addition, elementary school students in Indonesia continue to face challenges. In terms of reading comprehension, many students are skilled at answering questions posed in the form of stories. Based on the issues, the purpose of this study was to determine the sixth-grade students' reading comprehension and text problem-solving skills at B2 State Elementary School in Sukodono District, Sragen Regency, Central Java, Indonesia.

METHOD

Type and Design

This is a qualitative descriptive study. A qualitative study, according to Sidiq and Choiri (2019), seeks to comprehend a phenomenon experienced by subjects: behaviour, motivation, and actions. In addition, this study employed a case study approach to identify instances of students' text-based question-answering comprehension skills. This study examines the ability of sixth graders in reading comprehension to answer text-based questions in thematic student books. The research was conducted between January and March of 2022.

Data and Data Sources

Principal of the B2 State Elementary School, a sixth-grade teacher, and two sixth-graders were interviewed for this study. The authors chose the informants because the school's principal was the student's teacher at the time, and the students worked on the questions and were tested on their reading comprehension. Table 1 lists the participants in this study.

Table 1. Informants

Initial	Role	Age	Gender
S	Principal	55 years old	Male
DE	Teacher	35 years old	Female
AAS	Student	13 years old	Female
FC	Student	13 years old	Female

Data Collection Technique

Interviews, observations, and documentation were used as data collection techniques. The interview method was utilised to obtain verbal information and data from the informants. On the other hand, direct observations were made using the observation technique regarding sixth graders' ability to comprehend reading in order to solve text problems in student books. In addition, the documentation technique was used to collect data from documents such as student grade transcripts, reading text questions, and other documents relevant to the research topic.

Data Validity

The validity of the data using triangulation of sources was used to compare the results of observations and interviews among principals, teachers, and students regarding the students' ability to understand what they were reading to solve text problems. The next step was to compare them again with the results of the documentation.

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique used in this study is Huberman and Miles in interactive model (Sugiyono, 2017). The stages included data reduction in which the authors collected data in the field and then compiled and simplified them to be understood easily. The next one was data presentation wherein a form of a description of the data obtained in the area was presented briefly in a table or through a picture. Finally, the conclusions and verification are presented.

RESULT

Students' Ability to Understand reading

According to Gilakjani (2016), reading is an interactive process in which the reader employs successful reading methods to develop a meaningful representation of a reading material. Students' readiness to read is influenced by a variety of environmental conditions, therefore their reading comprehension differs. Several signs can allude to a student's ability to manage all activities aimed to create a reading love. According to Astuti et al. (2019), there are various markers of activities that nurture a student's love of reading so that he or she can comprehend what he or she is reading. Among the countless activities include encouraging kids to read books, asking students to narrate events they have read from various sources as a basis for learning, and urging students to tell stories. Motivating them to share what they have previously read and pushing them to read continuously are also helpful ways for encouraging pupils to value reading.

Reading requires an interaction between reading comprehension skills, the reader's cognitive processes, and the linguistic nature of a reading material (Smith et al., 2021). According to Tantri, several evidence indicate that pupils can absorb reading well (2016). First, pupils can understand the meaning of the author's words and idioms. Students can

understand both explicit and implicit meanings. Students can also draw implications from the lesson.

This study related to students' ability to understand reading refers to the expression from Tantri (2016). At the sixth grade level, all elementary schools can read fluently; as conveyed by the sixth-grade teacher, DE said:

"Yes, thank God. All 6th-grade students here can read everything; if 6th graders cannot read, it will be difficult when doing the exam."

Sixth-grade students are indeed expected to be able to understand reading because they must know the contents of the reading area. The ability that students must have to understand the lesson first is the ability of students to catch the meaning of every word and sentence they read. At the B2 State Elementary School, many sixth-grade students can grasp the meaning of words or sentences in a passage. Some still do not quite understand what one of the students, AAS, said:

"Yes, I can understand, but not everyone can understand a difficult word."

The answer from the interview with AAS was clarified by the response from her teacher, DE, who also stated that:

"In 6th grade, some students can understand the meaning of words that are familiar in their daily lives. If the words are not familiar, students also ask me to explain what the words mean. Even though they are in 6th grade, they are still a child. That must be the difficulty, too."

To understand the meaning of a sentence in reading, students must first read, then analyze the contents of the sentence and the main idea. In every sentence in the lesson, the author will have to make the sentence's main idea. Because each sentence has its main idea, it is hoped that the reader will understand the contents of each sentence after reading it.

The second reading comprehension ability that students must possess is the ability of students to capture the explicit meaning in a reading. Based on interviews with a teacher, sixth-graders could grasp the exact meaning of reading. Many students could understand, and only a few students had to be explained by the teacher first. This is also justified by the expression stated in by the principle:

"Yes, if it is written, students can find the meaning of the reading. It is possible that the student can interpret the meaning because the reading has explained the meaning of the word."

In addition to the ability to capture the explicit meaning, students must also have the ability to capture the implied essence. Sixth-grade students at SD N B2 still cannot catch the same importance of reading because the implied meaning is not contained in the lesson. Among students, capturing the implied essence is still different. The teacher must explain and lure students first. DE, a sixth-grade teacher, stated this:

"If the meaning is implied in the reading, most 6th graders need to explain it. As a teacher, I explained it"

The next ability that sixth-grade students must possess to understand reading is the ability of students to conclude what they have read. Most students can complete a lesson in the theme book at the sixth-grade level, although some have slightly wrong conclusions but are close to correct. In a class, one student with another student will undoubtedly have different results in concluding the readings in the theme book because the students analyze differently. As conveyed by the sixth-grade teacher, DE.

"Yes, all children can conclude a reading they have read. However, not all children are the same in concluding. So yeah, I was a teacher who does appreciate the different conclusions made by children."

The authors also obtained observational data in the sixth grade of SD N B2 related to students' ability to understand the reading. The teacher invited students to understand the different lessons in these books based on observations. On the average, students can read with comprehension, conclude a reading quite well, and capture the sentences' meaning. While reading, the teacher assessed students' ability to understand each lesson. Table 2 shows student scores related to reading comprehension in Indonesian language learning.

Table 2. List of Student Reading Score

Student's name	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3	Value 4
S1	80	80	90	0
S2	70	80	80	82
S3	80	70	90	82
S4	70	80	85	69
S5	70	70	75	78
S6	80	90	80	92
S7	80	60	100	83
S8	80	80	85	83
S9	80	60	90	73
S10	60	70	80	77
S11	80	60	95	76
S12	70	70	70	73
S13	80	60	95	93
S14	90	90	80	86
S15	80	70	95	75
S16	90	80	85	86
S17	80	60	75	70
S18	90	70	80	83
S19	70	70	80	79

Based on Table 1, the sixth-grade students of SD N B2 for reading learning scores have been seen to meet the minimum score. Students are already fluent in reading, but some students still look confused when faced with long lessons for reading comprehension.

Students' Ability to Solve Text Problems

The authors gave several text questions to the sixth graders of SD N B2 to determine their ability to solve text questions in reading comprehension. According to the theme book, the authors gave queries to students of SD N B2. The questions are from Civics Education, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Indonesian Language, and Art Education. Table 3 shows the final results of working on the text questions given by the authors.

Table 3. Student Names and Grades

Student's name	Total Score	Final score
S1	6	60
S2	10	100
S3	8	80
S4	10	100
S5	8	80
S6	8	80
S7	6	60
S8	8	80
S9	8	80
S10	6	60
S11	8	80
S12	8	80
S13	8	80
S14	10	100
S15	10	100
S16	8	80
S17	6	60
S18	8	80
S19	4	40

Table 3 shows the results of analyzing students' difficulties when working on text questions. Furthermore, Table 3 shows why students choose the answers based on questions and answers with students.

1. bacalah teks dibawah ini!

Suatu Negara tidak mungkin dapat memenuhi kebutuhan sendiri. Oleh karena itu, setiap Negara melakukan suatu kerja sama antarnegara untuk memenuhi kebutuhannya. Kerja sama antarnegara merupakan hubungan antara Negara satu dengan Negara lainnya melalui kesepakatan-kesepakatan tertentu dengan memegang prinsip keadilan dan saling menguntungkan. Seperti halnya Indonesia dan Negara-negara dikawasan Asia Tenggara. Mereka bersepakat untuk membentuk sebuah organisasi yang bernama ASEAN. ASEAN bertujuan menjalin kerja sama antarnegara Asia Tenggara. Salah satunya adalah kerja sama dalam bidang ekonomi.

Apa yang dimaksud kerja sama antarnegara?

- Kerja sama antarnegara adalah hubungan antara suatu Negara dengan Negara lainnya melalui kesepakatan-kesepakatan tertentu dengan memegang prinsip keadilan dan saling menguntungkan dan merugikan
- Kerja sama antarnegara adalah hubungan antara suatu Negara dengan Negara lainnya melalui kesepakatan-kesepakatan tertentu dengan memegang prinsip keadilan dan saling merugikan
- Kerja sama antarnegara adalah hubungan antara suatu Negara dengan Negara lainnya melalui kesepakatan-kesepakatan tertentu dengan memegang prinsip keadilan dan saling menguntungkan
- Kerja sama antarnegara adalah hubungan antara suatu Negara dengan Negara lainnya melalui kesepakatan-kesepakatan tertentu dengan memegang prinsip keadilan dan kemanusiaan

Figure 1: Citizenship Education Text Questions

Figure 1 is a picture of the text of Civics Education in which the reader read the discussion on the cooperation among ASEAN countries. The question is about the meaning of cooperation itself. In this case, students must use their knowledge and memory about the importance of cooperation. Of the nineteen students, four answered the number one question incorrectly, namely FC, IW, SN, and ADC. Based on the questions and answers with students after working on question number one, students have difficulty because students forget the material. These students fail the material, namely ADC and FC.

2. bacalah teks dibawah ini!

Suatu hari Udin sedang belajar tentang benda-benda magnetic dan nonmagnetic bersama ayahnya. Ayah Udin menjelaskan tentang benda magnetic dan nonmagnetic kepada udin. Ayah Udin berkata bahwa benda magnetic merupakan benda yang dapat ditarik kuat oleh magnet. Contoh benda-benda magnetic, yaitu besi, baja, nikel dan logam lainnya. Sementara, benda nonmagnetic dibedakan lagi menjadi 2 jenis, yaitu paramagnetic dan diamagnetic. Paramagnetic merupakan benda yang dapat ditarik dengan lemah oleh magnet, seperti aluminium tembaga, platina dan sebagainya. Sedangkan benda diamagnetic merupakan benda yang menolak magnet atau tidak dapat ditarik oleh magnet. Contoh benda diamagnetik, yaitu emas, seng, dan lainnya. Saat Udin belajar dengan ayah, ayah Udin menyiapkan beberapa benda agar udin dapat menggolongkan benda-benda tersebut berdasarkan sifat kemagnetannya. Benda-benda tersebut adalah penghapus, sendok, paku, pensil, peniti, uang koin, plastic, gunting, tusuk gigi, botol plastic, gelas kaca kalung emas dan panic.

Berdasarkan benda-benda yang telah disiapkan oleh ayah Udin manakah benda yang bersifat magnetis?

- a. Sendok, uang koin, kalung emas, paku
- b. Paku, sendok, gunting, peniti
- c. Paku, sendok, uang koin, pensil
- d. Sendok, Plastic, gelas kaca, paku

3. bacalah teks dibawah ini!

Figure 2: Natural Science Text Questions

Figure 2 is a picture of a text about Natural Sciences which discusses the nature of magnetic and non-magnetic objects. Five students answered this question incorrectly in question number two; namely, FC, AF, MI, MR, and AKM. Based on the question and answer with students after working on question number two, two students had difficulty, FC and MI, because they forgot the material. Meanwhile, the other three students, AF, MR, and AKM, had trouble because they thought they were wrong to distinguish the properties of objects -magnetic as well as non-magnetic.

3. bacalah teks dibawah ini!

Sebelum menjadi pengusaha Ali MUharam mencari peruntungan di Ibu Kota. Pengalaman hidup di Jakarta terbilang pahit dan tidak memiliki siapapun di Kota Jakarta. Ali mengadu nasib di berbagai maca tempat kerja yang tergolong tidak memberikan keuntungan banyak. Setelah sempat menjadi sales di kota Bogor, ia menggeluti pekerjaan sebagai penjaga kantin khusus kantin disebuah perusahaan. Tentu saja Ali ingin bisamendapatkan kehidupan yag lebih bak. Untuk mencapai hal tersebut ia memilih untuk memulai wirausaha macaroni. Ia memilih macaroni karena merasa tidak asing dengan makanan tersebut. Menu yang diujakan digerainya hari ini berasal dari resep milik ibunya yag dihidangkan di rumah. Nekat adalah modal yang penting dalam perjalanan Ali untuk memulai bisnis. Yang berawal berjualan sebuah gerobak dengan kerja kerasnya sekarang sudah memiliki 32 gerai Makaroni ngehe yang tersebar dibeberbaga kota di Indonesia. Berkat kerja kerasnya dalam merintis usaha macaroni yang diambil dari resep ibunya, Ali bisa hidup sekarang bisa memberikan penghidupan bagi ratusan orang lewat lapangan pekerjaan yang ia sediakan.

Sikap apa yang dapat kita contoh dari Ali Muharam?

- a. Pantang menyerah, berani dan rasa ingin tahu yang tinggi
- b. Pantang menyerah, rasa ingin tahu yang tinggi dan mudah putus asa
- c. Pantang menyerah, terampil dan malas
- d. Pantang menyerah, mudah putus asa da optimis

Figure 3: Social Science Text Questions

Figure 3 is a text that discusses social science learning. The material is an example of a good attitude. The student who answered incorrectly was only one student, IRP. According to IRP, he responded poorly because the student was not careful in answering the question.

4. bacalah teks dibawah ini!

Daftar riwayat hidup adalah formulir yang berisi tentang data diri seseorang secara lengkap. (1) nama saya Indra Yudha (2) saya lahir di Semarang, 17 Agustus 2018, (3) saya beragama Islam, (4) saya anak pertama dari dua saudara, (5) adik saya bernama Sinta Zahra, (6) adik saya memiliki hobi membaca dan menulis, (7) saya bersekolah di SD Widya Bhakti IV (8) hobi saya adalah menyanyi dan berolahraga.

Penjelasan yang tida perlu dicantumkan dalam daftar riwayat hidup adalah...

- a. (1) dan (2)
- b. (3) dan (4)
- c. (5) dan (6)
- d. (7) dan (8)

5. bacalah teks dibawah ini!

Figure 4: Indonesian Text Questions

Figure 4 is a picture of Indonesian text that discusses material about a person's life history. Five students answered incorrectly, SO, IW, SN, FW, and AUA. They expressed that they had difficulty reading the questions. Meanwhile, IW, FW, and AUA answered incorrectly because they felt confused about the answer.

5. bacalah teks dibawah ini!

Untuk memotivasi siswa agar gemar membaca, OSIS membuat poster: Budayakan bersama-sama teman gemar membaca

Kalimat yang tepat untuk memperbaiki kalimat pada poster tersebut adalah ...

- Membaca jadi tanggung jawab siswa
- Mari, budayakan gemar membaca
- Siswa-siswa gemar membaca
- Bagaimana membudayakan gemar membaca?

Figure 5: Art Education Text Questions

Figure 5 is an Art Education text question in which the material is about using the correct sentence on the poster. Four students did wrong on question five, FC, NTY, AKM, and HDF. After working on the questions, the researchers conducted a question and answer session with FC and HDF. According to them, it was challenging to do question number five because students forgot the material related to how to make posters. Meanwhile, NTY and AKM answered question number five incorrectly because they just answered without analyzing the question. They said that they did not know what to answer and they felt confused.

DISCUSSION

Based on the observations and interviews, almost all sixth-grade students can already understand the readings in the theme book. However, some are still less precise such as not being able to determine the implied meaning or in making a conclusion that is not appropriate from the reading book of the theme. Some students still had difficulty determining the main idea or content of the sentences in a reading. This finding was in line with Basuki's (2012) study, which showed that students' reading comprehension skills are still lacking. Afianti and Marlina (2021) claim that reading comprehension problems are one of the many issues in the educational process, and that these issues can be seen early on in the process as well as during and after learning to read. In this way, students will be more likely to comprehend and turn in readings that are suitable for their age. Additionally, inventive and creative teachers will develop lesson plans. Formal education will boost student acceptance of classroom instruction and increase its effectiveness (Boliti, 2018). Students in sixth-grade elementary schools can draw conclusions from theme books because doing so will make it easier for them to comprehend the reading.

Before drawing conclusions, students must understand the meaning of the words or paragraphs in order to determine each paragraph's main idea. In each paragraph, the author includes the reading's central idea. According to Kandupi (2021), teachers should instruct students in intensive reading techniques to enhance their ability to determine the main idea in reading. Some sixth-graders are still having difficulty determining the content of each sentence.

The essential ability to understand reading is a must for students to be able to work on questions in the form of text. This ability is not passed down from parents but must come from the learning process. A study by (Laily, 2014) found that a story is a verbal form in everyday life that has the meaning of a concept and is expressed in a story or reading. Problems in text questions are not only given after learning theories but also experiences related to students' daily lives. Students must be able to apply the knowledge they have to answer in-story questions. The teacher also needs to discuss a keyword into a question that is adaptive to the process of giving the concepts of the learning material.

Based on the results of tests and questions and answers with students, many answered the questions incorrectly because they were not careful in reading and they instantly forgot the material. However, many students still answered several questions poorly compared to

all of those who answered correctly. There were only four students who were correct in answering these questions and got a score of one hundred. Besides, there were students whose scores were above the minimum score and students whose scores were below. There were only five students whose scores were below. This finding is in line with the study of Yuwono et al. (2018), which showed that students are still less careful in reading during the implementation of working on text questions.

CONCLUSION

The following are the findings based on data gathered in the field and supported by theoretical research. The students of B2 State Elementary School are all proficient readers in the sixth grade. On the other hand, a typical child can read with relative ease. Second, aside from the class's stated purpose, students must read, understand the material, and interpret meanings in order to understand the lesson. On average, they can infer conclusions from the reading. Thirdly, sixth graders who can understand a lesson perform well on text-based questions and can understand questions. Few students' exam scores on text-based questions fell beneath the required level. There are some limitations to this research. First, since the authors only looked at one institution, there is a lack of diversity in study locations. Second, the writers only selected four informants. The student then clarifies any remaining concerns for them.

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