



## Vocational School Eleventh-Grade Students' Ability to Read Report Texts

Lely Refnita<sup>1</sup>, Ernati<sup>2</sup>, Khairul<sup>3</sup>, Muthia Khairunnisa<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Lecturers, Bung Hatta University, Padang, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup>Graduate, Bung Hatta University, Padang, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Lely Refnita

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this study was to describe the ability of the eleventh-grade vocational school students in Padang, West Sumatera, Indonesia, to comprehend report texts. A descriptive research design was employed, using purposive sampling to select 25 students from a vocational school as the sample. A 25-item multiple-choice reading test, validated by reading experts and aligned with the students' curriculum materials, was administered. The test showed a high reliability index of 0.93. Findings revealed that 48% of the students had high reading ability, while 52% demonstrated low ability. Students showed strong competence in identifying main ideas but had difficulty understanding detailed information within report texts. These results imply the need for instructional improvements focusing on reading for specific details. It is recommended that teachers incorporate targeted reading strategies, such as guided reading and question-based text exploration, to support comprehension of detailed information. Additionally, students should be encouraged to practice close reading and engage with a variety of report texts to develop more balanced reading skills.

**KEYWORDS:** Reading Comprehension Ability, Report Text, Vocational School.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill in language acquisition and is essential for academic success. It involves more than just decoding written symbols; it requires the construction of meaning through active engagement with a text (Grabe & Stoller, 2013; Hanifah, 2014). In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), especially in Indonesia, reading comprehension remains a persistent challenge for many students, impacting their overall academic performance.

Reading comprehension is defined as the ability to process text, understand its meaning, and integrate it with existing knowledge (Snow, 2002;

Hijazi, 2018). It involves understanding a text's purpose, structure, vocabulary, and the logical relationships between ideas. As Budi and Zuhro (2023) assert, reading is an active, meaning-making process whereby readers interact with texts to derive interpretation and insight. Without comprehension, reading becomes a mechanical activity devoid of educational value.

In vocational schools, the importance of reading is particularly evident, as students are expected to master subject-specific content and technical information often presented in English. Cheon and Ma (2014) emphasize that general comprehension is the most common reading goal across educational and professional settings, making the development of strong reading strategies crucial for vocational learners.

Reading practices are typically classified into extensive and intensive approaches. Extensive reading is designed for general understanding and fluency, while intensive reading involves close analysis of language and meaning (Rashid, Hui, & Islam, 2021; Nation, 2009). The latter is especially relevant in classroom settings where students are expected to engage critically with texts, such as report texts.

Report text is a genre of factual writing commonly used to present information about a class of things, either natural or man-made, in a systematic and objective manner. Several scholars have provided definitions that highlight the informative and generalizing nature of this text type.

According to Anderson and Anderson (1997), a report text is designed to describe the way things are in the world, often covering an entire class of entities. Gerot and Wignell (1994) emphasize that report texts aim to classify and describe general phenomena or objects in a factual manner. Similarly, Knapp and Watkins (2005) define reports as texts that provide information about a class of things, organizing facts with a



focus on general characteristics rather than individual cases. Emilia (2011) describes the report text as a means of conveying information based on systematic observation, highlighting the description of parts, behaviors, and functions of a subject. In academic contexts, Hyland (2004) states that report writing typically generalizes knowledge about a topic and presents it in an organized, impersonal, and informative tone.

Linguistically, report texts exhibit several distinctive features that support their objective and informative purpose. These include the use of general nouns (e.g., “reptiles,” “plants”), which refer to entire classes rather than specific instances. The use of the simple present tense is common, reflecting the timeless truths described in the reports (e.g., “Birds have feathers”). Additionally, technical or scientific vocabulary relevant to the subject matter is frequently used (e.g., “photosynthesis,” “habitat,” “evaporation”), which supports precision and clarity.

Report texts often make use of the passive voice to shift focus from the doer to the process or object, especially in scientific contexts (e.g., “The eggs are laid in nests”). Descriptive language, such as adjectives and attributive phrases, is used to elaborate on the characteristics of the subject (e.g., “It has a long, muscular tail”). Importantly, report texts maintain an objective tone, avoiding personal opinions or emotional language, and are typically structured to begin with a general classification, followed by a series of descriptive paragraphs detailing the physical features, behavior, habitat, or functions of the topic. These linguistic and structural features serve to uphold the primary function of the report text: to systematically inform the reader about a subject in a clear, factual, and generalizable manner.

In short, report text is a factual genre designed to classify and describe general phenomena, often in the fields of science, nature, and technology (Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Pransiska, 2016). Its generic structure typically includes a general classification followed by a description of parts, qualities, or behaviors. The purpose of a report text is to inform or describe, making it a common feature in English textbooks and national curricula. Within Indonesia’s *Merdeka Curriculum*, which promotes student-centered learning, the use of authentic and informative texts such as report texts is encouraged to support real-world language use (Ramadhoni, 2023).

However, despite its significance, many vocational students in Indonesia struggle to comprehend report texts. Preliminary classroom

observations in a vocational school in Padang indicated that students face difficulties particularly in higher-order comprehension tasks, such as drawing inferences, understanding specific details, and interpreting language features. This reflects a broader trend noted in the literature.

Previous studies have yielded mixed findings. While Iskandar, Delfi, and Syarfi (2017) and Dicara, Aruan, and Syarfi (2018) reported that vocational students demonstrated generally good comprehension of report texts, other research indicates more concerning trends. Nasution, Sapitri, and Sari (2022) found that students commonly faced challenges with identifying main ideas, interpreting vocabulary in context, referencing, and locating supporting details. Similarly, Fitriana and Yulianingsih (2021) observed that many students struggled with distinguishing general statements from specific descriptions in report texts.

These mixed findings suggest that while some students may perform well, others face consistent challenges that hinder deeper comprehension. There remains a need for localized, classroom-based research to better understand student performance in specific educational contexts and provide targeted pedagogical responses.

In response, this study aims to describe the ability of eleventh-grade vocational school students in Padang, West Sumatera to comprehend report texts, with particular focus on their ability to identify main ideas and understand detailed information. The results are expected to inform both instructional practices and curriculum development, especially within vocational education, and improve students’ reading comprehension.

## II. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive quantitative design to provide a systematic, objective, and factual account of students’ ability to comprehend report texts (Refnita, 2018). The design was chosen to identify the current level of reading comprehension among vocational school students without manipulating variables.

The study population consisted of 380 eleventh-grade students from 11 vocational majors at a public vocational school in Padang, West Sumatera, Indonesia. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 25 students from the Electrical Power Installation Engineering major, due to its high enrollment and consistent



attendance. This allowed for focused data collection while representing one of the school's most prominent majors.

The research instrument was a 25-item multiple-choices reading comprehension test based on English curriculum materials taught in the vocational school. The test was designed to assess students' understanding of report texts, specifically targeting their ability to identify main ideas and comprehend detailed information.

The content validity of the test was ensured through expert judgment from two university lecturers specializing in reading instruction. A pilot test was conducted with students from a different class, and a split-half method was applied to find out the reliability index. It yields a reliability coefficient of 0.93 (using the Pearson Product Moment formula), which indicates very high internal consistency. Item analysis showed difficulty indices ranging from 0.31 to 0.70, and discrimination indices from 0.21 to 0.70, indicating that the test items were of moderate difficulty and acceptable discriminatory power.

The test was administered during regular school hours in a supervised setting. Students were given 60 minutes to complete the test. Clear instructions were provided to ensure consistency. No external aids (e.g., dictionaries or smartphones) were allowed during the test.

To analyze the data, each correct answer was awarded one point, while incorrect answers received zero. The total score was converted by dividing the total correct answer with 25 and then the result is multiplied by 100.

In accordance with the school's Minimum Mastery Criterion (MMC), students scoring 75 or higher were categorized as having high reading ability, while those scoring below 75 were classified as having low reading ability. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data in terms of frequency and percentage.

### III. FINDINGS

The results indicated that the overall reading ability of the eleventh-grade students in comprehending report texts was low. Only 12 (48%) students reached the Minimum Mastery Criterion (MMC), while 13 (52%) students did not, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Overall Reading Comprehension Ability

Ability Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High ( $\geq 75$ )	12	48
Low ( $< 75$ )	13	52
Total	25	100

Regarding specific skills, 19 (76%) students had high ability in finding the main idea of report texts, while 6 (24%) students had low ability, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' Ability to Find the Main Idea

Ability Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High ( $\geq 75$ )	19	76
Low ( $< 75$ )	6	24
Total	25	100

In contrast, only 10 (40%) students demonstrated high ability to understand detailed information, while 15 (60%) students showed low ability in this skill (Table 3).

Table 3. Students' Ability to Understand Detailed Information

Ability Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High ( $\geq 75$ )	10	40
Low ( $< 75$ )	15	60
Total	25	100

## IV. DISCUSSION

### 1. Overall Reading Ability of the Eleventh-Grade Students

This study found that less than half of the students met the Minimum Mastery Criterion (MMC) in reading report texts, indicating a generally low level of reading comprehension. The school's expectation was that all students (100%) should achieve this standard, but only 48% succeeded. This finding aligns with Dicara, Aruan, and Syarfi (2018), who reported that 44% of vocational students reached the minimum standard, while 56% did not. Both studies suggest that many vocational students continue to face challenges in achieving adequate comprehension of report texts.

The finding that 52% of students in this study exhibited low reading comprehension of report texts may be attributed to several interrelated linguistic, cognitive, and instructional factors. One significant reason is the complex linguistic features



commonly found in report texts, such as technical vocabulary, dense noun phrases, and passive voice constructions, which can impede comprehension for students with limited exposure to academic English (Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Hyland, 2004). These features often obscure meaning and require higher-level syntactic and semantic processing that many vocational school students have not yet developed. Furthermore, report texts typically avoid narrative cues and instead present non-chronological, fact-based information, which can be cognitively demanding for students who are more familiar with story-based or procedural texts (Knapp & Watkins, 2005).

Another contributing factor is the lack of background knowledge. Report texts often assume familiarity with scientific or technical topics (e.g., ecosystems, machinery, animal classifications), and without adequate schema, students struggle to make connections that support comprehension (Anderson & Anderson, 1997; Emilia, 2011). This aligns with findings in reading comprehension research showing that prior knowledge is a crucial factor in understanding informational texts (Kintsch, 1998). Additionally, limited vocabulary breadth and depth reduce students' ability to decode the meaning of unfamiliar terms within context. Instructionally, students may not receive sufficient explicit teaching of reading strategies tailored to report texts—such as identifying main ideas, inferring meaning from structure, and decoding scientific terminology—which further hinders their ability to process the content effectively (Snow, 2002).

Lastly, motivation and engagement may play a role, especially if students perceive the content as irrelevant or too difficult. Vocational school students, in particular, may find report texts disconnected from their practical interests, which lowers cognitive engagement and effort during reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Together, these linguistic, cognitive, and motivational factors likely contribute to the high percentage of students demonstrating low comprehension in this genre.

## 2. Ability to Identify the Main Idea

The majority of students (76%) showed strong ability to identify the main idea of report texts, as evidenced by their correct responses to related test items. For example, all students (100%) correctly answered a question on the main idea of a paragraph about tornadoes, and 96% answered a similar question on auroras. This supports findings from Budi and Zuhro (2023), who reported that 95% of students could accurately identify main

ideas in English texts. These consistent results suggest that recognizing the main idea is a relatively well-developed skill among vocational students.

Students often find it relatively easier to identify the main idea due to the genre's predictable structure and explicit general statements. Report texts typically follow a consistent organizational pattern—beginning with a general classification or definition of the subject, which is usually placed at the beginning of the text or paragraph. This placement aligns with students' reading expectations and allows them to easily locate the main idea (Anderson & Anderson, 1997; Knapp & Watkins, 2005). In addition, the main idea in report texts is commonly expressed through clear, topic sentences that explicitly state the general nature or characteristics of the topic being described. According to Gerot and Wignell (1994), this feature reflects the purpose of the report genre: to generalize factual information about a whole class of things rather than individual cases.

Furthermore, the use of present tense and non-chronological order helps to maintain focus on timeless truths and general facts, making it easier for students to distinguish main ideas from supporting details (Emilia, 2011). Unlike narrative or procedural texts, which rely heavily on sequence or event development, report texts emphasize a stable and informative tone, which assists learners in identifying core information (Hyland, 2004). Additionally, students are often familiar with the report format from their science or social studies classes, where texts begin with broad definitions before elaborating with examples or descriptions. This cross-curricular exposure enhances their genre awareness and helps them recognize patterns that point to the main idea (Derewianka, 1990). For these reasons, many students are able to identify the central idea of report texts with greater ease than they can extract more specific or implied information.

## 3. Ability to Understand Detailed Information

In contrast, only 40% of students demonstrated proficiency in understanding detailed information from report texts. Many struggled to correctly answer questions requiring close attention to specific facts. For instance, only 40% correctly answered a question about mammatus clouds, and 44% identified regions receiving more energy from the sun. This finding is consistent with Nasution, Sapitri, and Sari (2022), who found that students frequently have difficulty comprehending detailed aspects of English texts. Such challenges indicate a



need for instructional emphasis on strategies to enhance detail-oriented reading comprehension.

Despite the informative nature of report texts, several linguistic features pose significant comprehension challenges for vocational school students, particularly when locating specific information. A major difficulty stems from the use of *general and abstract nouns*, which refer to categories rather than specific instances (Anderson & Anderson, 1997; Knapp & Watkins, 2005). For example, in the sentence “Reptiles lay eggs on land,” students often struggled to identify which reptiles were being referred to or under what circumstances the event occurred. This abstraction makes it difficult for learners to connect the information to concrete prior knowledge (Christie & Derewianka, 2008).

Another common obstacle is the prevalence of *technical and scientific vocabulary*, which enhances factual accuracy but often impedes comprehension for students lacking background knowledge (Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Emilia, 2011). Terms such as *photosynthesis*, *chloroplasts*, and *chlorophyll* were unfamiliar to many learners, hindering their ability to grasp the core message of sentences such as “Photosynthesis occurs in chloroplasts containing chlorophyll” (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2008).

In addition, the *dense informational structure* of report texts—often realized through *complex noun phrases*—can overwhelm students’ cognitive processing. For instance, the sentence “The blue whale, the largest known mammal, feeds on krill using baleen plates” packs multiple facts into one unit, making it harder to extract key details (Hyland, 2004; Schleppegrell, 2004). This aligns with research suggesting that the nominal style of scientific English can obstruct understanding for novice readers (Halliday & Martin, 1993).

*Passive voice* is another feature that can obscure meaning. In sentences like “The eggs are incubated by the female for 30 days,” the agent and action are less immediately clear than in active constructions. This grammatical choice can complicate the tracking of cause-and-effect relationships (Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Gibbons, 2002).

Further complicating comprehension is the *lack of clear referential markers*. Statements such as “This species is found in tropical regions” provide vague information, making it difficult for students to identify the subject or the specific location (Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Derewianka, 2011). Such vagueness disrupts coherence and impedes meaning-making.

Finally, the *organizational structure* of report texts—typically moving from general classification to specific descriptions—may be unfamiliar to students. Sentences like “Birds are warm-blooded animals” followed by loosely connected facts about behavior or habitat can be difficult to navigate, especially without clear rhetorical signposting (Emilia, 2011; Fang, 2012). As a result, students often struggle to locate relevant information efficiently.

## V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of this study indicate that more than half of the participating vocational school eleventh-grade students demonstrated low reading comprehension of report texts. This outcome is likely due to the linguistic complexity of the genre, including the use of technical vocabulary, dense information structures, and generalization, as well as students’ limited background knowledge and lack of familiarity with academic text features. However, the study also reveals that students are generally able to identify the main idea more easily than specific information, likely due to the consistent organizational structure and clear topic sentences characteristic of report texts.

To address students’ difficulties in comprehending specific information, especially in vocational education contexts, targeted instructional strategies are essential. These include explicit instruction on the structure and purpose of report texts, vocabulary pre-teaching, and the use of reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, summarizing, and questioning. Additionally, modeling how to unpack complex sentences and employing graphic organizers can support learners in managing dense informational content. Making reading materials relevant to students’ vocational interests can further increase motivation and engagement. Integrating these approaches into a structured and sustained reading program has the potential to significantly improve students’ comprehension skills and academic success across content areas. Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of genre-based literacy instruction tailored to learners’ needs and contexts.

To improve students’ comprehension of report texts, especially in vocational schools, several instructional and learning strategies are recommended. For teachers, it is essential to incorporate explicit genre-based instruction, emphasizing the purpose, structure, and language features of report texts. Teachers should also provide pre-teaching of technical vocabulary and



offer guided reading practices to model how to identify main ideas, break down complex sentences, and interpret factual descriptions. Using graphic organizers, such as concept maps or classification charts, can also help students visualize and retain key information. Furthermore, selecting report texts related to students' vocational fields—such as mechanics, agriculture, business, or technology—can enhance relevance and motivation.

For students, active engagement in reading through strategies such as annotating texts, highlighting important points, and asking questions before, during, and after reading can improve comprehension. Students are also encouraged to build their background knowledge through independent reading, especially on topics relevant to their future careers. Developing metacognitive awareness—knowing how to monitor one's own understanding—will help students become more strategic and independent readers. Collaboration through peer discussions and group work can further reinforce comprehension and critical thinking about the text. With consistent practice and support, students can improve their ability to engage with academic and vocational texts more effectively.

This study focused on vocational school eleventh-grade students' ability to comprehend report texts, particularly in identifying main ideas and specific information. While the findings offer valuable insights, further research is needed to expand understanding in several key areas. First, future studies should involve larger and more diverse samples across different vocational schools and regions to enhance generalizability. Second, longitudinal studies could explore how students' comprehension of report texts develops over time, especially in response to specific instructional interventions. Third, comparative research between vocational and general secondary school students could shed light on the role of curriculum and instructional context in shaping text comprehension outcomes.

Additionally, further inquiry should examine how different genres—such as narrative, explanation, or procedural texts—affect reading comprehension in vocational learners, and whether genre-based instruction differentially improves students' performance. Finally, it would be beneficial to investigate the impact of digital and multimodal report texts, which are increasingly used in vocational training, on students' reading engagement and comprehension strategies.

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