

**EXPLORING STUDENTS' READING DIFFICULTIES IN DESCRIPTIVE TEXT
AT SMA YWKA PALEMBANG**

A THESIS

BY

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**ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM
FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH PALEMBANG
2026**

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TEXT AT SMA YWKA PALEMBANG**

A THESIS

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Menyatakan bahwa skripsi berjudul:

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SMA YWKA PALEMBANG'**

Beserta seluruh isinya adalah benar merupakan hasil karya sendiri dan saya tidak melakukan penjiplakan atau pengutipan dengan cara-cara yang tidak sesuai dengan etika keilmuan dalam masyarakat ilmiah.

Atas pernyataan ini, saya siap menerima segala sanksi yang berlaku atau yang ditetapkan untuk itu, apabila di kemudian ternyata pernyataan saya tidak benar atau ada klaim dari pihak lain terhadap keaslian skripsi saya.

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MOTTO AND DEDICATION

Motto:

“We have our own path, so just take it easy and accepted your self”

Dedication:

I want to dedicate this thesis to those who have offered their prayers, support, guidance, and inspiration throughout this journey:

- To my beloved parents, thank you for your unceasing prayers, your sincere sacrifices, and your unwavering faith. Your love and support have been the foundation that enabled me to complete this work.
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ABSTRACT

Pradana, M. I. K. 2026. *Exploring Students' Reading Difficulties in Descriptive Text at SMA YWKA Palembang*. Thesis, English Education Study Program, Sarjana Degree (S1), Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang. Advisor (I) Dr. Kurnia Saputri, M.Pd., (II) Dr. Dita Adawiyah, M.Pd.

Keywords: reading difficulties, reading comprehension, descriptive text, qualitative case study design

This study aimed to examine the difficulties experienced by students in comprehending descriptive texts and to identify the factors associated with those difficulties at SMA YWKA Palembang. Employing a qualitative case study design, the study involved three eleventh-grade students who were selected through purposive sampling. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via WhatsApp Voice Notes and were analyzed using the thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The findings revealed that the participants experienced a range of difficulties in comprehending descriptive texts, including challenges related to unfamiliar vocabulary, lengthy or complex sentence structures, the identification of main ideas and specific information, the organization and connection of information, and the construction of an overall understanding of the texts. In addition, several factors were found to contribute to these difficulties, including limited vocabulary knowledge, linguistic and syntactic complexity, insufficient reading practice and reading habits, interest and motivation, background knowledge and topic familiarity, concentration and attention, and instructional support. Overall, the findings demonstrate that students' difficulties in comprehending descriptive texts are multidimensional and result from the interplay of both linguistic and non-linguistic factors.

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Finally, the researcher hopes that this thesis will be beneficial to readers and provide a useful contribution to the field of English education, particularly reading comprehension.

Palembang, August 2026

The Researcher,

M. Iqbal Kharisma Pradana

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- 8. Curriculum Vitae**

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents, background of the study, formulation of the problems, objective of the study, significance of the study,

A. Background of the Study

Reading is one of the most essential skills in English language learning, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Indonesia. Beyond functioning as a means of obtaining information, reading also contributes significantly to the development of other language skills, including writing, speaking, and listening. In secondary education, reading competence plays a crucial role in enabling students to understand various text genres included in the curriculum. Among these genres, descriptive text is considered important because it helps students develop their ability to comprehend detailed information, vocabulary, and sentence structures used to describe particular people, places, objects, or phenomena (Fitri et, al 2023).

Reading comprehension is a fundamental component of successful reading. According to Duke et. al (2021), reading comprehension is “the simultaneous process of extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (p. 663). This definition suggests that reading is not limited to recognizing written symbols; rather, it requires readers to actively construct meaning through engagement with the text. Similarly, Smith et. al (2021) argue that comprehension involves integrating textual information with prior knowledge in order to create meaningful understanding. Therefore, effective reading comprehension requires not only linguistic competence but also the ability to connect new information with existing knowledge and experiences.

The complexity of reading comprehension is further explained by Kendeou, et.al (2020), who state that comprehension depends on several interconnected cognitive processes, including vocabulary knowledge, inferencing ability, background knowledge, and metacognitive strategies. Supporting this view, Schema Theory proposed by Anderson (2018) emphasizes that readers' background knowledge strongly influences their understanding of a text. Students with insufficient prior knowledge often experience difficulties in relating new information to what they already know. Likewise, the Interactive Model of Reading developed by Rumelhart (2017) highlights that reading comprehension results from the interaction between bottom up processes, such as word recognition, and topdown processes, such as activating prior knowledge. Weaknesses in either process may hinder successful comprehension.

Despite the importance of reading comprehension, many Indonesian EFL learners continue to encounter difficulties in understanding descriptive texts. Previous studies have identified several common challenges, including limited vocabulary, inadequate grammatical knowledge, difficulty identifying main ideas, and problems connecting information across sentences (Susanti S Marlina, 2019). Research conducted by Pratiwi et.al (2024) revealed that students in South Sumatra frequently struggle with unfamiliar vocabulary and complex sentence structures when reading descriptive texts. Similarly, Holandyah et al. (2024) found that students' reading difficulties are influenced not only by linguistic factors but also by cognitive and affective aspects.

Several scholars have also highlighted the factors contributing to reading difficulties. Grabe and Stoller (2020) argue that reading challenges arise from the interaction among linguistic knowledge, cognitive processing, and strategic reading abilities. In addition Dardjito et. al (2023) reported that Indonesian learners, including those outside English related majors, frequently encounter difficulties when reading academic texts. These findings suggest that reading problems are not solely associated with educational level but are also influenced by students' learning strategies and perceptions of reading tasks.

Students' perceptions play an important role in shaping their learning experiences and engagement in reading activities. Li & Xue(2023) emphasize that learners' perceptions significantly affect their participation, motivation, and achievement in classroom learning. Positive perceptions can encourage students to engage actively with reading tasks, whereas negative perceptions may reduce motivation and hinder learning progress.

In the context of SMA YWKA Palembang, reading comprehension difficulties are still evident among students, particularly when dealing with descriptive texts. Based on preliminary observations and teachers' reports, many students struggle to understand vocabulary, interpret lengthy sentence structures, and identify important information within texts. Furthermore, low motivation, ineffective reading strategies, and negative attitudes toward English reading activities appear to exacerbate these difficulties (Palupi & Sari, 2021). These conditions indicate the need to investigate how students perceive the challenges they encounter during reading comprehension activities.

Against this background, the present study seeks to explore students' perceptions of the challenges they encounter in comprehending descriptive texts at SMA YWKA Palembang. Specifically, the study aims to identify the linguistic, cognitive, and affective factors that contribute to students' reading comprehension difficulties. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the existing literature on reading comprehension in EFL contexts and provide valuable insights for teachers in designing more effective instructional strategies to improve students' reading comprehension skills.

B. Formulation of problem

Based on the research background, the researcher formulate the research problem as follows:

1. What difficulties do students face in reading descriptive texts?
2. What factors that influence students' difficulties in understanding descriptive texts?

C. Objective of the Study

1. To investigate the various difficulties faced by students when reading descriptive texts.
2. To identify and analyze the factors affecting students' difficulties of descriptive texts.

D. Significance of the Study

The results of this research are expected to be useful both theoretically and practically for the following parties, as follows:

1. The Researcher

It is very useful for researcher to understand to understand why students at SMA YWKA Palembang have difficulties reading Descriptive text.

2. Readers

The results of this study have important implications for readers, , because readers will learn about the researcher desire to understand what causes students have difficulty descriptive texts.

3. Other Researchers

This may serve as a reference to extend their research. The findings are expected to be useful for other researchers in completing further literature reviews and in supporting studies with the same title as this research.

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