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WHY IS ENGLISH HARD TO READ? SURVEY ON ELEMENTARY STUDENTS' READING DIFFICULTIES

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ABSTRACT

The research aims to find out what difficulties students experience when reading English texts and factors causing difficulty in reading English texts.

The type of research is quantitative with survey methods. The total population was 31 students, sampling used total sampling, with a total sample of 31 students. This research was carried out at MI Nurul Islam Penawangan in December-May 2023. Data collection techniques used a questionnaire totaling 10 indicators with 24 statement items, interviews collected 1 indicator with 7 question items and documentation. Test validity with content validity and construct validity, while reliability is by looking of Cronbach's alpha value. Data analysis techniques using quantitative descriptive.

Based on the research, the results obtained were that: 1) 80.6% of students had difficulty reading English texts, 82% had difficulty understanding the contents of English texts, 96.8% had difficulty retelling the contents of English texts; 2) Internal factors causing difficulty in reading English texts are boredom while studying (86.6%), difficulty in pronunciation (82%), difficulty in vocabulary (96.8%) and difficulty understanding grammar (96.8%). Apart from that, external factors that cause students to have difficulty reading English texts are learning media (29.0%), inadequate supporting infrastructure (12.9%), and students studying at home (22.6%).

Keywords: reading difficulties, english texts, elementary school students

Introduction |

In the process of learning to read English texts, students imagine the difficulties in understanding reading. Students cannot escape the need to read English books in order to grow and develop knowledge. According to Crawley & Mountain (in Rahim, 2005) that reading is essentially something complicated and involves many things, not just reciting writing but also visual, thinking, psycholinguistic and metacognitive activities (Astuti, 2021:316).

Reading (reading) is a process carried out by readers to obtain the message that the writer wants to achieve through the medium of words or written language. According to



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(Tarigan, 1979:7); (Kustanti, 2016:86) based on practice, the teaching and learning process of students is faced with various difficulties, one of which is namely understanding reading text, from the difficulties that impact reading text that make it difficult to achieve the true meaning of reading. Reading difficulties or problems according to Rahmawati (2016) argue that learning English experiences difficulties with the idea of one sentence versus another (Huliatunisa et al, 2022:426).

The factor that influences class V students to have difficulty reading English texts at MI Nurul Islam Penawangan is that there is no English teacher, so English subjects are taught by class V teachers. According to the results of interviews conducted by researchers, teachers stated that students had difficulties when faced with learning English to read, so the grades obtained by students were less than satisfactory.

Based on this description, it is important to carry out research on the problem of analyzing the difficulty of reading English texts in elementary school students.

Literary reviews |

In general, every research theme that will be studied has previous research of the same or similar nature which is used as an initial basis. So researchers need previous research that is relevant to this research. In this case the relevant research is:

1. Research by Alviani Saridevita, Asep Suhendar, & Najib Hasan (2022)

Saridevita, Suhendar, & Hasan (2022) research entitled "Analysis of English Vocabulary Pronunciation Errors of Class V Students of SDN Pondok Makmur". This study aims to describe the difficulties in pronunciation of English vocabulary for fifth grade students at SDN Pondok Makmur. The research results show that there are still many students who still pronounce English vocabulary incorrectly. The results of the English story text reading test on 12 students and female students showed that their ability to speak English was still lacking.

2. Research by Yayah Huliatunisa et al (2022)

Yayah Huliatunisa et al., research (2022) is entitled "Evaluation of the Level of Difficulty in Learning English for Class IV Students at SDN Karang Tengah". This research aims to examine the level of difficulty experienced by class IV students at SDN Karang



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Tengah 7 during the process of learning English. The results of this research are that students have difficulty learning the four reading skills, namely the ability to listen, speak, read and write. The type of research used is qualitative research which uses observation, interview and documentation data collection research methods.

3. Research by Agus Rofi' & Sigit Vebrianto Susilo (2022)

Rofi' & Susilo (2022) research entitled "Preliminary Reading Difficulties in Elementary School Students' English Learning". The aim of this research is to explain the initial reading difficulties of class III students at SDN Burujulwetan IV. The research results obtained show difficulties in beginning reading, namely difficulty recognizing letters, deletion or replacement of letters, difficulty reading each word, difficulty distinguishing between vowels and consonants, difficulty combining letters and syllables.

4. Research by Desi Sri Astuti & Dian Shinta Sari (2022)

Research by Astuti & Sari (2022) entitled "Analysis of Difficulties in Reading English Texts for Students in the Mathematics Education Study Program". This research aims to analyze the difficulty of the factors that influence the reading comprehension of students in the Mathematics Education Study Program. The research results found that the most difficulty faced by students was in determining the main idea. Then the difficulty in understanding reading is a psychological factor. The method in this research is descriptive to describe the difficulties faced by students.

5. Research by Sucandra et al., (2022)

Sucanda., et al research (2022) is entitled "Analysis of Difficulties in Mastering Vocabulary in Local Content Learning in English in Grade IV Students at SD Plus Latansa, Demak Regency". This research aims to describe the factors causing difficulties in mastering English vocabulary in class IV. The results of this research state that the factors experienced by students are the condition of the student's body, student intelligence, and low interest in learning. This research method uses descriptive qualitative methods.

Table 1. Similarities & Differences with Previous Research



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1	Saridevita, Suhendar, & Hasan's (2022) research entitled "Analysis of English Vocabulary Pronunciation Errors of Class V Students at SDN Pondok Makmur"	Both are researching English lessons in elementary/MI	Researching vocabulary pronunciation
2	Huliatunisa et al., (2022)'s research is entitled "Evaluation of the Level of Difficulty in Learning English for Grade IV Students at SDN Karang Tengah".	Both are researching English lessons in elementary/MI	Researching learning difficulties
3	Rofi' & Susilo research (2022) is entitled "Initial Reading Difficulties in Elementary School Students' English Learning".	Both are researching English lessons in elementary/MI	Research about beginning reading
4	Astuti & Sari's research (2022) entitled "Analysis of Difficulties in Reading English Texts in Mathematics Education Study Program Students"	Both research about English lessons	The research subjects were students
5	Research by Sucanda et al., (2022) entitled "Analysis of Difficulties in Mastering Vocabulary in Local Content Learning in English in Grade IV Students at SD Plus Latansa, Demak Regency"	Both are researching English lessons in elementary/MI	Researching the difficulties of mastering vocabulary

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1. Reading

a. Understanding reading

There are so many theories about the meaning of reading. Reading is certainly different from speaking in everyday life. Mulyati stated that the activity "reading is something important so it needs to be taught from a young age. A reader at some time will probably control knowledge about topics that he already knows. Maruti stated that "reading is an open window to world information". In the current global era, information is always multiplying every day, either through electronic or print media, or other means. One way of conveying information that is long-lasting and far-reaching is through reading. Maruti stated "reading comprehension is a reading activity whose main goal is to understand the



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content of the reading correctly (Rudyanto, 2017). Reading is an ability that students must master in elementary school because the ability to read is directly related to the entire student learning process (Pratiwi, 2017).

Based on opinions regarding the meaning of reading, it can be concluded that reading is an activity of putting words together to obtain the latest information. Reading can also broaden our own insight. It is unimaginable if you live without reading, maybe life will feel lacking, especially everything you get from reading information.

b. Reading function

Reading activities according to Slamet (2009:68) have the following functions:

- 1) Intellectual Function
 - By reading a lot we can increase our intellectual level, develop our reasoning power.
- 2) Creativity Stimulating Function

The results of reading can encourage, move oneself to work, and are supported by breadth of insight and choice of vocabulary

- 3) Practical Function
 - Reading activities are carried out to gain practical knowledge in life.
- 4) Recreational Function
 - Reading is used as an effort to entertain the heart.
- 5) Informative function by reading a lot of information such as newspapers, magazines and so on, you can get various information that is really needed in life.
- 6) Religious Function
 - Reading can be used to build and increase faith, expand one's mind, and draw closer to God
- 7) Social function
 - Reading activities have a high social function where they are carried out orally or aloud. In this way, reading activities are used by other people to direct attitudes of speech, action and thinking.
- 8) Lonely Kill Function



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Reading activities are also carried out to fill free time. Based on this explanation, reading will bring many functions, these functions can be used according to individual needs (Irawan, 2020:70).

c. Benefits of Reading

Apart from the above functions, Slamet Y. St (2009: 69) explains the benefits of reading as follows:

- 1) Gain a lot of life experience
- 2) Obtain general knowledge and various specific information that is very useful for life
- 3) Know various major events in the civilization and culture of a nation.
- 4) Can find out about developments in science and technology.
- 5) Can enrich the mind, broaden the horizons of vision and think
- 6) Can solve various life problems and can lead someone to become clever and intelligent.
- 7) Can enrich words, expressions, terms and others that really support listening, speaking and writing skills.
- 8) Increasing the potential of everyone and strengthening existence (Irawan, 2020:70) d. Purpose of reading

Reading is a requirement in life. Through reading activities, you can find out and master various things. The purpose of reading is to understand the purpose/purpose of reading, namely, to obtain meaning from what is read and develop the reading skills needed to understand written material. Thus, reading requires a certain level of ability and knowledge (Sismulyasih, 2015:69).

The purpose of reading according to Tarigan (1979:9) is as follows: (1) Reading to discover or find out about discoveries that have been made by the character. Reading like this is called reading to obtain facts. (2) Read to find out why this is a good and interesting topic, the problems found in the story. Reading like this is called reading to obtain main ideas. (3) Reading to find or know the contents of each part of the story.

Based on the statement above, the purpose of reading is as a tool to obtain



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information, knowledge or whatever suits a person's needs or interests.

e. Stages of reading development

According to Chochrane, students' reading ability develops at several stages, dividing the stages of reading development into 5 stages, including:

- 1) Fantasy Stage, the stage where students start to think that this book is very important, look at or flip through the book and sometimes children bring books they like.
- 2) Concept formation stage, this stage students see themselves as readers and begin to involve themselves in reading activities.
- 3) Stage of reading pictures, in this stage students become aware of the visible print and begin to express words.
- 4) Introduction to reading stage, this stage students begin to recognize signs in the environment such as reading on milk cartons and so on.
- 5) Fluent reading stage, this stage students start to read books freely (Ariyati, 2013).

Based on the explanation above, in connection with the reading stages that students go through, it is necessary to know and understand how to choose stimuli according to the students' potential. This must also be paid attention to when learning to read English texts (reading text).

f. Aspects of reading

Reading activities must master several aspects. Broadly speaking, there are two important aspects in reading, namely:

- 1) Mechanical skills can be in the lowest order. This aspect includes:
 - a) Introduction to letter shapes
 - b) Introduction to linguistic elements (phonemes, words, phrases, clause patterns, sentences, etc.)
 - c) Recognition of the relationship between spelling and sound (skills in voicing written material)
 - d) Reading speed is slow
- 2) Skills that are understanding can be considered at a higher order. This aspect includes:
 - a) Understand simple meanings



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- b) Understand the significance or meaning
- c) Evaluation or assessment
- d) Flexible reading speed

g. Type of reading

Reading has three types, namely:

- 1) Reading aloud, reading aloud is a reading activity that makes sounds or pronounces the sounds of language quite loudly.
- 2) Silent reading, reading silently or silently is a reading activity that is done without sound, without lip movements, without head movements, without and without disturbing other people. Silent reading practice must be started early so that children can read on their own (Maulida, 2020).
- 3) Reading comprehension, reading comprehension is an ability that must be developed in increasing students' knowledge of developing knowledge and information. Reading comprehension aims to enable readers to derive meaning from the reading they read, apart from that there are other objectives of reading comprehension, namely maximizing reading aloud, using appropriate strategies, increasing knowledge of a topic (Rahel et al., 2021: 237).

2. Difficulty Reading

a. Difficulty reading English.

In the process of learning to read text, students experience difficulties when understanding reading and retelling it. Reading English is different from Indonesian, students must learn and practice reading English thoroughly (Febriani, 2022).

Based on the explanation above, students who have difficulty reading become an obstacle in learning, when this problem does not receive serious attention from the teacher. The symptoms above are things that happen to students and can interfere with the smooth reading of the text.

b. Reading difficulty factor



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According to Jamaris (2014: 137), difficulties in learning to read are caused by the development of the central nervous system which experiences minimal dysfunction. Apart from that, the factors that cause students to have trouble learning to read are:

1) Internal Factors

a) Interest in reading

Interest in reading is something that arises consciously in a child, therefore interest needs to be developed by parents or teachers so that it can bring goodness to students.

b) Motivation

Teaching and learning activities to read in the classroom will run smoothly if students have great motivation so they can achieve their learning goals.

c) Possession of Reading Interest

There are 4 language skills, namely reading, speaking, listening and writing. Everything must be done regularly so that students can acquire reading skills well.

2) External Factors

External factors are factors that arise from outside the student. Factors that influence from outside consist of the role of teachers, environment, family and facilities. This can be realized by having facilities that support reading activities (Triatma, 2016). Because success in learning is greatly influenced by a good teacher (Purbowati, 2020).

c. Reading Criteria.

In general, the linguistic aspects that are assessed in reading have 4 criteria, including the following:

1) Voice clarity

Read with a clear voice in terms of pronunciation or pronunciation of words or sentences, clarity of voice is needed when reading so that there is no misinterpretation by the listener.

2) Intonation



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According to (Putra et al., 2021:459) Intonation is a unique style of speaking that places high and low emphasis on certain words in a sentence.

3) Smoothness

The fluency aspect is the fluency in conveying sentences that are read and accepted by the listener. Good reading fluency is done by paying attention to pauses, intonation and reading expressions (Maksum, 2022).

3. English Learning.

a. English Learning

Learning is a process, namely the process of managing, organizing the environment around students so that it can grow and encourage students to carry out the learning process. Learning is also said to be the process of providing guidance or assistance to students in carrying out the learning process. In language learning it is very important. One of them is a foreign language which is studied in elementary schools or Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Learning English is an international language that is very important to master. (Safitri et al., 2022).

Learning English in elementary schools is very necessary. Firstly, early childhood language learning is better understood, secondly, in today's digital era where all life systems use English, having English in elementary schools will make it easier to use technology (Saridevita et al., 2022).

b. English Language Skills

There are four aspects of language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (Hakim, 2020). Language skills in English are called language art and skills. We use the term "art" to describe something that is personal, creative and original. On the other hand, skill "skill" is used to express mechanical things. There are four skills in language, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Each skill is closely related to other skills in various ways (Khunaifi, 2019:21).

d. The advantages of learning English



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In the current era, English is also known as an international language that is very necessary. The skill to master English is supported by the existence of English language subjects which have begun to be introduced in school. Learning English for elementary school age children is very good because English is an international language which will be useful in the future (Rosaria, 2018:13).

d. Disadvantages of learning English

In Indonesia, English is only studied at school but is not used in everyday life. Because English is not the language used every day. This results in difficulties experienced by students in learning English (Khairuzzaman, 2016).

One of the shortcomings in learning English is that many students find it difficult in the learning process, namely mastering vocabulary. Students' low ability to master vocabulary is a problem that must be resolved properly (Sucandra et al., 2022)

4. Factors Causing Difficulty Reading English Texts

English has four aspects, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Apart from that, there are three language elements that play an important role in supporting these four aspects, namely pronunciation (pronunciation), vocabulary (vocabulary), and grammar (language structure). These three elements are the factors causing difficulty in reading English texts. Students who experience difficulties when reading English texts as a foreign language because they do not understand English pronunciation, vocabulary pronunciation, and do not understand the structure of English well (Aslamiah, 2020: 135). According to Westwood 2008, other causal factors cause students to have trouble reading English texts (Mardiani et al., 2021:987):

- a. Limited vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary is the most important component in creating meaning.
- b. Lack of fluency in reading, some students often find it difficult because they cannot read well.
- c. They are less familiar with English subjects because this language is a foreign language which is quite difficult for them.



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- d. Difficulty level in English text. The level of text difficulty is one of the factors that influences the difficulty of reading English texts. Complex texts in terms of concepts, vocabulary, sentence length and structure that are difficult for readers to understand.
- e. Weak verbal reasoning. This difficulty is caused by students' poor connection between new information and the knowledge they already have.

5. Characters of the fifth grade of elementary school

Student character identified as one of the factors that greatly influences the learning process is the result of intelligence, initial abilities, cognitive style, learning style, motivation and socio-cultural factors. The characteristics possessed by the high class (Sabani, 2019):

- a. General characteristics
 - 1) The reaction time is fast
 - 2) Perfect muscle coordination
 - 3) Likes to move and play
- b. Characteristics of intelligence
 - 1) Have the ability to concentrate attention
 - 2) The ability to think more
- c. Social characteristics
 - 1) Don't like things that are dramatic
 - 2) Likes social environments
 - 3) Enjoy social environmental stories
 - 4) Be brave but still use logic
- d. Movement activities carried out

Children can perform a higher activity, so children have the ability to express the activities carried out. Due to the rapid development of students, it is best for teachers and parents to always accompany them. Thus, teachers must be able to adapt to students' characteristics when learning takes place at school. On the other hand, when at home parents must always control their child's development.



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Research method

The type of research is quantitative with survey methods. The total population was 31 students, sampling used total sampling, with a total sample of 31 students. This research was carried out at MI Nurul Islam Penawangan in December-May 2023. Data collection techniques used a questionnaire totaling 10 indicators with 24 statement items, interviews collected 1 indicator with 7 question items and documentation. Data analysis techniques using quantitative descriptive.

The questionnaire used in this research is detailed in the table 2.

Table 2. Reading difficulty questionnaire instrument grid

Variable	table Indicators Statemens		Item nur	nber	Total
			(+)	(-)	
Difficulty reading English texts	Difficulty in reading English texts	 I find it difficult to read English texts I have no difficulty reading English texts. 	1	2	2
	Difficulty in capture the content of reading in English texts	I have difficulty understanding the contents of English texts I can understand the contents of English texts well and correctly	3	5	2
	Difficulty answering questions according to the content of the English text	I have difficulty answering questions from the teacher which are taken from the contents of the English text I often answer questions from teachers that are taken from the contents of English texts correctly	4	6	2
	Difficulty retelling the contents of English texts	 I have difficulty when the teacher asks me to retell the contents of the English text I can retell the contents of an English text in front of the class well and 	7	10	2



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		correctly.			
Interest in reading English texts	 1. 2. 3. 	to Indonesian.	8,9, 11		3
Motivation in reading English texts		My friends and I encourage each other if we have difficulty reading English texts. The teacher always encourages me when I have difficulty reading English texts. My parents encourage me when I have difficulty reading English texts.	12,13 14		3
Students' lack of knowledge regarding pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar	2.	remember the meaning of English vocabulary).	16, 17, 18	15	4
The role of the teacher when teaching lessons	1.	The teacher creates a pleasant atmosphere during learning Teachers use media during learning	19	20	2
School environmental factors	 2. 3. 	I feel comfortable when studying at school The infrastructure at my school supports learning The school provides a blackboard for learning activities.	21, 23	22,	3
Family	I	always learn to read	24		1



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environmental	English texts at home		
factors			

Instrument testing was carried out to determine the level of validity and reliability of the research instrument.

a. Validity Test Results

Validity testing is carried out using content validity with expert judgment, and construct validity. Using SPSS version 26.0 with a significance level of 5%. The number of valid questions is 24.

b. Reliability Test

Reliability is used to obtain a measuring instrument that can be trusted. To measure the reliability of the instrument in this study, SPSS version 26.0 was used with an alpha value of 0.90. The results obtained were a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.549.

Results and Discussion

1. Data Description

This research was conducted at MI Nurul Islam Penawangan with a sample of class V students, using a questionnaire research instrument. The calculation of results (mean, median, mode, standard deviation) and categories in this study can be seen in the table below.

Table 3. Mean, Median, Mode and Standard Deviation Result

N	Valid	31
	Missing	0
Mean		14,0323
Median		14,0000
Mode		14,00
Std. Deviation		2,48306

Table 4 Guidelines for Providing Statement Interpretations

Category	Intervals	% intervals
Very high	19-24	76-100%
High	13-18	51-75%
Medium	7-12	26-50%
Low	0	0-25%

From table 4 it means that the very high category is at a value of 76-100% and the low



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category is at a value of 0-25%. The following are the results of research data which have been categorized according to the guidelines in table 4.

Tabel 5. Research Results Data

Number	Statement	%	Category
1	Feeling difficult when reading English tex	80,6%	Very high
2	Have no difficulty reading English text	12,9 %	Low
3	Difficulty understanding the contents of English texts.	82 %	Very high
4	Difficulty answering questions from the teacher from the content of the English text	100 %	Very high
5	Can understand the contents of English texts	16,1 %	Low
6	Often answers questions from teachers	35,5%	Medium
7	Difficulty retelling the contents of English texts	96,8 %	High
8	Feeling lazy when learning English texts	19,4 %	Low
9	Prefer English to Indonesian	16,1 %	Low
10	Can retell the contents of English texts	12,9 %	Low
11	Bored during English lessons	80,6 %	Very high
12	Encourage each other friends	25,8 %	Medium
13	The teacher gives encouragement	93,5 %	Very high
14	Parents provide encouragement	96,8 %	Very high
15	Master all the vocabulary	12,9 %	Low
16	Difficulty in pronunciation	82 %	Very high
17	Difficulty remembering vocabulary	96,8 %	Very high
18	Difficulty understanding grammar	96,8 %	Very high
19	The teacher creates a pleasant atmosphere during learning	96,8 %	Very high
20	Teachers use media	29,0 %	Medium
21	Feel comfortable studying at school	93,5 %	Very high
22	Supportive school infrastructure	12,9 %	Low
23	Whiteboard provided	93,5 %	Very high
24	Learn to read English texts at home	22,6 %	Low

From the results of the research data above, it shows that the answers to the statements of having difficulty reading, difficulty understanding, difficulty answering



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questions, difficulty pronouncing are in the very high category. Meanwhile, those in the low category included statements that they felt lazy when learning (19.4%), supportive school infrastructure (12.9%), studying at home (22.6%).

The results of each indicator are described below:

1. The first indicator is difficulty reading English text. The following are the results of the data that have been analyzed by researchers, which can be seen in table 6.

Tabel 6. Distribution of Categorization of Reading Difficulties

Number	Statemens	Category	F	%
1	Difficulty reading	Very high	25	80,6 %
2	Difficulty	Very high	27	82,1%
	understanding			
3	Difficulty telling	Very high	30	96,8 %

From table 6 it can be concluded that many class V students at MI Nurul Islam still have difficulty reading and understanding the content of reading texts. The diagram of difficulty reading English text can be seen in Figure 1

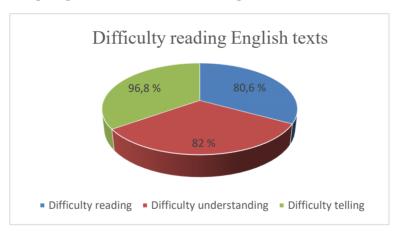


Figure 1. Reading difficulty diagram

2. The second indicator in this research is internal factors. The following are the results of data analysis which can be seen in table 7.

Tabel 7. Categorization of Internal Factors for Reading Difficulties

Number	Statemens	Category	F	%
1	Feel bored	Very high	25	80,6%
2	Pronounction Difficulty	Very high	27	82,1%



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3	Vocabulary Difficulties	Very high	30	96,8%
4	Grammar Difficulty	Very high	30	96,8%

From table 7 it can be concluded that the internal factors experienced by fifth grade students at MI Nurul Islam when reading English texts are difficulties with pronunciation and grammar difficulties. So, it can be seen in Figure 2.

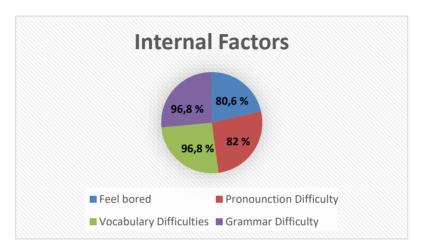


Figure 2. Internal factors diagram

3. The third indicator is external factors. The results of the data analysis carried out by researchers can be seen in table 8.

Table 8. Categorization of External Factors of Reading Difficulty

Number	Statemens	Category	F	%
1	Instructional Media	Medium	9	29,0%
2	Infrastructure	Low	4	12,9%
3	Study at home	Low	7	22,6%

From table 8 it can be concluded that the external factors experienced by class V students at MI Nurul Islam when reading English texts are infrastructure. So, it can be seen in Figure 3.



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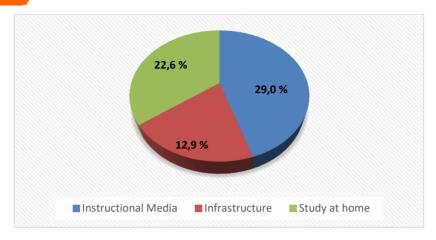


Figure 3. External factor diagram

Conclusions |

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- 1. The difficulties experienced by class V MI Nurul Islam students when reading English texts are difficulty reading English texts in the very high category, difficulty understanding the content of the English text in the very high category, and difficulty retelling the content of the English text in the high category.
- 2. Factors of difficulty in reading English texts among fifth grade students at MI Nurul Islam, namely feeling bored when learning to read English texts, difficulty in pronunciation, difficulty remembering vocabulary, and difficulty understanding grammar in the very high category, use of learning media in the medium category, supporting school infrastructure in the low category and students learning to read English texts at home in the low category.



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