

AN ANALYSIS OF THE ELEVENTH-GRADE STUDENTS' ABILITY IN COMPREHENDING FAIRY TALES AT SMK 1 MUHAMMADIYAH PADANG

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to describe the ability of the eleventh-grade students in comprehending fairy tales at SMK 1 Muhammadiyah Padang in the academic year 2024/2025. The population was 89 students, and 14 students were selected as the sample using a convenience sampling technique. The instrument was a reading comprehension test with 25 short-answer items covering character traits, setting of time and place, and moral messages. The test was scored by two raters and showed a reliability coefficient of 0.72. The findings revealed that the students' overall comprehension ability was low; 92.86% of students had low ability and only 7.14% had high ability. In character traits, 78.57% had high ability; in identifying setting, 50% had high ability; while in moral messages, 100% of students had low ability. It can be concluded that students' comprehension of fairy tales was generally low, especially in identifying moral messages. Therefore, teachers are suggested to use varied instructional strategies such as story mapping, guided discussions, and inferential questioning to improve students' higher-order thinking skills.

Keywords: *Reading Comprehension, Fairy Tales, Character Traits, Setting, Moral Message*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most essential skills in English language learning because it provides students with access to knowledge, information, and cultural understanding. According to Brown [2], reading is not merely the recognition of written symbols but also an interactive process of constructing meaning. Dalman [3] further emphasizes that comprehension involves the ability to understand not only literal information but also implied meanings, requiring both cognitive and interpretive skills. In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), reading comprehension becomes a significant challenge because students are required to process texts that are not part of their native linguistic environment.

Reading comprehension has been categorized into several levels: literal, inferential, and critical [4]. Literal comprehension refers to the ability to identify facts that are explicitly stated in the text, such as names, places, or time. Inferential comprehension involves interpreting information that is implied but not directly stated, while critical

comprehension requires evaluating and reflecting on the meaning of the text. These levels highlight that comprehension goes beyond recognition of words—it requires interpretation, analysis, and evaluation.

One type of reading material often used in the classroom is literary text, such as fairy tales. Fairy tales are fictional stories that combine imagination with moral lessons and cultural values. According to Habsari [5], fairy tales provide opportunities for students to learn about character traits, moral values, and settings while developing their imagination. When reading fairy tales, students are expected to be able to identify characters and their traits, determine the setting of the story, and interpret the moral message delivered by the author. However, moral messages in fairy tales are often implied rather than explicitly stated, requiring students to make inferences and apply higher-order thinking skills.

In practice, many students struggle with these skills. Based on the researcher's observation during

the teaching practicum at SMK 1 Muhammadiyah Padang, students were able to answer questions about characters and settings but faced great difficulties when asked about the moral values of the stories. For example, when reading a fairy tale, they could mention the names of characters or where the story took place, but they could not explain the lesson or moral that could be learned. This indicates that while students managed literal comprehension, they struggled with inferential comprehension, particularly in interpreting moral messages.

Considering the importance of reading comprehension and the observed challenges, this research was conducted to analyze the ability of the eleventh-grade students of SMK 1 Muhammadiyah Padang in comprehending fairy tales. Specifically, this study aimed to describe their ability to comprehend character traits, settings, and moral messages

METHOD

This research used a descriptive research design. The population was the eleventh-grade students at SMK 1 Muhammadiyah Padang, totaling 89 students from three classes. A convenience sampling technique was applied to select 14 students as the sample. The instrument used was a reading comprehension test consisting of 25 items: 10 items on character traits, 10 items on setting (time and place), and 5 items on moral messages. The test was scored by two raters, and the reliability was measured using the Pearson Product Moment formula, resulting in a correlation coefficient of 0.72, indicating high reliability.

Data were analyzed by calculating students' scores and classifying them into high and low ability categories based on the school's minimum mastery criteria.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that the students' overall comprehension of fairy tales was generally low. Only 1 student (7.14%) had high ability, while 13 students (92.86%) had low ability. In terms of character traits, most students (78.57%) showed

high ability, while 21.43% showed low ability. For the setting of time and place, half of the students (50%) demonstrated high ability, and half (50%) demonstrated low ability. In contrast, in comprehending moral messages, all students (100%) fell into the low ability category.

Table 1. Research Findings

Aspect	High	%	Low	%
Overall Comprehension	1	7,14%	13	92,86%
Character Traits	11	78,57%	3	21,43%
Setting (Time and Place)	7	50%	7	50%
Moral Messages	0	0%	14	100%

As shown in Table 1, students demonstrated relatively better performance in identifying character traits, with 78.57% categorized as high ability. This indicates that students were able to recognize and understand the personalities, behaviors, and attitudes of the characters in the stories. In identifying the setting of time and place, students' ability was equally divided; half of the students were in the high category, while the other half were in the low category. This suggests that while some students could determine when and where the stories took place, others still struggled.

On the other hand, students encountered the greatest difficulty in identifying moral messages. All 14 students (100%) were categorized as having low ability in this aspect. This finding indicates that students had problems in drawing inferences, making interpretations, and understanding the implied values of the stories.

These results are consistent with previous studies that argue students often find it easier to understand surface-level information, such as characters and explicit settings, but struggle with deeper comprehension skills, such as inferring moral lessons [2], [3]. According to Habsari [5], moral messages in fairy tales are not always explicitly stated, requiring higher-order thinking skills such as critical analysis and inference. This explains why

the students in this study faced more challenges in this area.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that teachers should apply more varied and interactive strategies to improve students' comprehension, particularly in interpreting moral messages. Strategies such as story mapping, guided discussions, and inferential questioning are recommended, as they can help students move beyond literal comprehension toward interpretive and evaluative levels [4]. In addition, incorporating multimedia storytelling may also engage students more effectively and stimulate deeper understanding.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

It can be concluded that the eleventh-grade students' ability in comprehending fairy tales at SMK 1 Muhammadiyah Padang was generally low, especially in identifying moral messages. Teachers should apply more varied and interactive teaching methods to improve students' comprehension, while students are encouraged to practice identifying story elements and moral lessons more actively. Future researchers may explore the use of technology and multimedia to enhance reading comprehension skills.

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