

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING ABOUT LEXICAL MEANING AND THEIR READING COMPREHENSION

*Elfitriani^{#1}, Rini Kusrini^{#2}, Sri Kusnasari^{#3}

^{#123} Program Studi Manajemen Informatika Komputer, STMIK Triguna Dharma

E-Mail: ^{#1}trianielfi@gmail.com

Abstract

Reading is one of the four language skills that should be seriously mastered for every one who wants to speak English well. This skill has special space since it enables ones, in this case students, get information they really need for their study. Those who are good at reading will easily get knowledge and skills that can be used to be success in their life. Reading books broadens our horizons. When we look out to gather more knowledge from books, we find a whole new world yet to be discovered. It exposes ourselves to new facts and figures especially those which may speak against our own established concepts. It makes us aware of the other view points as well. So, the habit of reading books should be cultivated among students. One of the point that can help them to comprehend their reading well is their understanding about lexical meaning. It assists them to enhance the information within the book quickly. So, there is strong correlation between students' understanding about lexical meaning and their reading comprehension.

Keywords: Correlation, lexical Meaning, and Reading Comprehension.

Abstrak

Membaca merupakan satu dari empat keterampilan berbahasa yang harus dikuasai dengan serius oleh setiap orang yang ingin menggunakan Bahasa Inggris dengan baik. Keterampilan ini mendapatkan tempat khusus karena ia memampukan orang, dalam hal ini para pelajar, untuk mendapatkan banyak informasi yang mereka benar-benar butuhkan untuk pendidikan mereka. Bagi yang mahir dalam membaca akan mendapatkan pengetahuan dan keterampilan dengan mudah yang dapat digunakan untuk mendapatkan kesuksesan dalam hidup mereka. Membaca buku meluaskan cakrawala berfikir kita. Ketika kita mengumpulkan lebih banyak informasi dari buku, kita akan menemukan dunia baru, fakta baru dan konsep-konsep baru yang dapat kita gunakan untuk mempertahankan konsep kita ketika berdebat. Membaca juga membuat kita menghargai pandangan-pandangan orang lain. Jadi kebiasaan membaca sebaiknya ditanamkan pada pelajar. Salah satu hal yang dapat menolong mereka dalam memahami bacaan mereka dengan baik adalah pemahaman mereka tentang makna leksikal. Hal ini dapat menolong mereka mendapatkan informasi yang ada dalam buku

dengan cepat. Jadi, ada korelasi yang kuat antara pemahaman mereka tentang makna leksikal dan pemahaman bacaan mereka.

Kata Kunci: *Korelasi, Makna Leksikal, dan Pemahaman Bacaan.*

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the Study

Every individual needs knowledge, wisdom, ideas and the ability to build better life; to solve both existing and arising problems of life, so that he may live his life comfortably and contentedly. These are such important elements that enable one to follow the path of reason and intellect while helping him to grow and develop from within. Even those who have been deprived of education seem to have had an intense desire of these. This leads one to recognize and remind the importance of learning while emphasizing on "Live and learn" so that one can enhance knowledge and eventually get wise to oneself. It is thus very necessary for every individual to keep himself well-informed and cultured by dint of learning and agreeing to take it as a lifelong learning process. This is possible, one can become cultivated if he cultivates good practices or habits. One of the best activities that brings one gratifying fruition is the habit of reading because reading is the best source of providing massive amount of useful information.

Blessed is the person who has inculcated the habit of reading as he is not lonely or unhappy, but being at ease, he is in the company of scholars, authors, poets, writers, artists and

professionals while reading, with pleasure, the contents to his heart content. In fact, the blessings of reading are in plenty, but the single most significant one is that the reader is bestowed upon a lifelong source of inspiration and pleasure of contentment provided that he reads the right kind of stuff that may let him tread in the right direction leading him towards the right thinking and the right application of acquired knowledge.

The society we live in is changing rapidly. The present period of time is the period of science and technology and the constant developments in the domain of technology have brought unparalleled progress in almost all the fields of human endeavors and the technology is universally laid and accepted and agreed with all its inclusive structure. Thus, in this dynamic world which is replete with challenges and intense competitions all around, one must strive to be competent and skilled that he may find favorable opportunities; that the capabilities may have occasion to blossom and finally the life may be happy and fulfilling. This can be attainable if an individual habitually reads the right kind of books and stuff to enhance both knowledge and wisdom.

Every one knows that reading is important, including students. Reading

can give so many advantages to build good characters of the students. However, these benefits of reading do not interest the students much so it seems like they are reluctant to dedicate their time to master this skill well. Instead of having serious practice toward this skill, they prefer spending time on *facebook*, for example. This phenomenon among our students cannot be allowed, this must be corrected so they will really realize how important reading is to the success of their life.

Reading skill must be developed by means of extensive and continual practice. In this case, students do not only read the text, but also understand the information from their reading text. They can do this if they have large vocabulary and understand lexical meaning of the words. It means through their reading they will get much vocabulary and at the same time their understanding about lexical meaning of words will drive them to the better understanding of their reading.

Reading has important part in the improvement of English mastery. Through reading, students can develop their vocabulary and use it for communication. Besides, reading also provides the sentence patterns that can be used to be well contractive in their writing and speaking. It is said that reading is a core that will lead us to the success of our communication in this modern era.

2. The Review Of Literatures

1. Correlation

Correlation is a way to measure how associated or related two variables are. The researcher looks at things that already exist and determines in what way those things are related to each other. Correlation is relationship between two variables or more.

Correlation exists if one thing mutually relates to another. Cranbank (1979:185) defines: "...correlation as a positive or negative relationship between to tests or two abilities or factors". It is said that correlation is relation between the different scores. Then, he defines that correlation in the research is used as measure of the strength between test of data.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that correlation refers to the relationship of one thing to another thing. The correlation exists if one thing is mutually related to another side. One the words, if it is not good at one side, certainly not good at another side, it means that there is a correlation between two sides.

The purpose of doing correlation is to allow to make predictions in the future. For example, there is a correlation between income and education. We find that people that have higher income will have higher education for their children, since education is getting more and more expensive. So, based on this fact, the government should take action whether to provide free education for unlucky people who have low income of give access to those people to get

more income for their students' education.

According to Sudiyono (2000:167), there are two types of directions of correlations. It means, there are two patterns that correlation can follow; they are called positive and negative correlation.

a. Positive Correlation

In a positive correlation, as the values of one of the variable increase, the values of the second variable also increase. Likewise, as the values of one of the variable decrease, the values of another variable also decrease. For instance, there is a correlation between student's motivation of learning and his achievement in study. It means that the more motivated he is the more achievements that he will have.

b. Negative Correlation

In a negative correlation, as the values of one variable increase, the values of another variable decrease. On the contrary, as the values of one of the variable decrease, the values of the second one increase. This is still a correlation. It is an '*Inverse*' correlation. The word 'negative' is a label that shows the direction of the correlation. For example, there is a negative correlation between TV viewing and class grades. The students who spend more time in watching TV tend to have lower grades. In other words, students with higher grades spend less time in watching TV.

2. Reading

Reading is an important part in learning English. Through reading, the learners get vocabulary that they need to communicate with others both in written and spoken. They will be more involved to their surroundings and have a wider horizon. The term of 'reading' means a complex system of deriving meaning from written materials that requires some points such as:

1. The skills and knowledge to understand how phonemes or speech sounds are connected;
2. The ability to decode unfamiliar words;
3. The ability to read fluently;
4. Sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension;
5. The development of appropriate active strategies to construct meaning from written materials; and
6. The development and maintenance of a motivation to read.

These points make students experience 'fun' reading and really want to get more materials to read on.

Reading is the ability to anticipate meaning in lines of printed so that the reader is not concerned with the mechanical details but with grasp ideas from groups of words that convey meaning (Zints, 1980:5). Grape and Stoller (2002:9) define that reading as the ability to draw meaning from written page and interpret this information appropriately. So, reading is not only the activity of seeing the written words but the students also

have to absorb the ideas of the writer into their understanding.

Further, Grape and Stoller (2002:13) said through their concept that reading has some purposes, they are:

1. Reading to search for simply information
 2. Reading to skim quickly
 3. Reading to learn from the texts
 4. Reading to integrate information
 5. Reading to write (searching information needed for writing)
 6. Reading to critique texts, and
 7. Reading for general comprehension.
3. Comprehension

Reading without meaning is an unsatisfying and inconsequential exercise. The goals of the teaching reading program should be aimed toward enriching students' comprehension skills. According to Alexander (1988:192) :
“...comprehension is an active process that involves the child's integration of prior knowledge with information in the text in order to comprehend the text”.

Comprehension involves understanding the vocabulary, seeing the relationship among words and concepts of organizing ideas, recognizing the author purposes, making judgment and evaluating. Reading comprehension is a process a making sense of written ideas through meaningful interpretation and interaction with language. Reading comprehension acquires information from context and combining different

elements into a new whole, it is process of using one's existing knowledge to interpret text in order to construct meaning.

Otto (1979:241) states that in comprehending reading text, readers have to find the main ideas to obtain the messages. In other words, finding the main ideas will determine the quality of their reading comprehension. It means that in reading comprehension, the reader is expected to understand fully the reading material. The reader should be able to give a clear explanation about the reading material when she or he is asked some questions concerning the ideas contained there. If she or he is able to do so, so we can say that she or he has already understood the reading material.

4. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is viewed by most linguist as composed of a multiple number of skills and abilities that are interrelated and interdependent. Therefore, reading comprehension need some skills to make students' effectiveness as readers.

Reading comprehension is a skill that must be developed and it can be only improved by means of extensive and continual practices. Grellet (1986:3) states that reading comprehension is a skill to understand a written text by extracting the required information that may be explicit or implicit. It means that reading comprehension is a process to

get some information both clearly stated or in form of the ideas that are not exactly stated.

Reading comprehension involves taking meaning from a text in order to obtain meaning from the text (Turner, 1988: 23). An individual may be said to comprehend a text fully when he can:

1. Recognize the words and sentences of the text and know what these words and sentences mean (obtain literal meaning)
2. Associate meanings, both denotative and cognitive, from personal experiences with the printed text (obtain inferential meaning)
3. Recognizing to all the meanings and/or her/his perceptions of them fit together contextually.
4. Make value judgments based on the reading experience (read critically).

Payne (1992:35) defines reading comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. We use the words extracting and constructing to emphasize both the importance of the text as a determinant of reading comprehension. There are some elements that are involved in reading comprehension, namely:

1. The reader who is doing comprehension
To comprehend: a reader must have a wide range of capacities and abilities. These include cognitive capacities (e.g. attention, memory,

critical analytic, ability, inference, and the ability to visualize), motivation (a purpose for reading, an interest in the content being read, as a reader), and various types of knowledge (vocabulary, domain and topic knowledge, linguistic and discourse knowledge, knowledge of specific comprehension strategies).

2. The text to be comprehended
The features of text have a large effect on comprehension. Comprehension does not occur by simply extracting meaning from text. During reading, the reader constructs different representations of the text that are important for comprehension. These representations include, for example, the surface code (the exact wording of the text), the text base (ideal units representing the meaning), and a representation of the mental models embedded in the text; the proliferation of computers and electronic text and multimedia documents in addition to comprehension, such as dealing with the non-linear nature of hyper text, but it is also offers the potential for supporting the comprehension of complex text, for example through hyperlinks to definition of translation of difficult or to paragraph of complex sentences.
3. The activity in which comprehension is a part
Reading does not occur in a vacuum. It is done for a purpose, to achieve some ends. Activity refers to this

dimension of reading. A reading activity involves one or more purposes, some operations to process the text in hand, and the consequences or the performing the activity. Prior the reading, a reader has purpose, which can be either externally imposed (e.g. completing a class assignment) or internally generated.

The purpose is influenced by a cluster of motivational variables, including interest and prior knowledge. The initial purposes can be changed as the reader reads. That is, a reader might encounter information that new question that makes the original purpose either incomplete or irrelevant. When the purpose externally mandated, as in instruction, the reader might accept the purpose and complete the activity.

5. Lexical Meaning

Lexical meaning is the meaning of a certain word without having any dependency with other words. It is literal meaning. It is also known as the dictionary definition, is the meaning of the term in common usage. As its other name implies, this is the sort of definition one is likely to find in the dictionary. A lexical definition is usually the type expected from a request for definition, and it is generally expected that such a definition will be stated as simply as possible in order to convey information to the widest audience (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lexical_definition).

Lexical meaning is the meaning of word without its prefix and suffix. It is bare meaning. It is important enough for the students to have a lot of words known in for the sake of their reading comprehensions' success.

There are many ways to improve students' vocabulary. One of the ways is Reading. It can be practised every time. Students should spare their time on reading regularly. However, this habit is not on the top popular chart than other hobbies among the students. Some students say that reading English text is difficult and make them tired, and finally they refuse to make this valuable hobby becomes theirs.

However, the need of information will lead them to read a lot sooner or later. Having a lot of vocabulary will definitely help them to gain the information they need to complete their study. Giving students assignment is a good way to force them to read a lot. By doing the assignment they search the information done by reading all related materials for their assignment. However, if the hobby of reading done with a sincere intension, it will be much better for them and enhance their skills on it.

3. Problems and The Aims of the Study

There are problems in this study that need to be paid serious attention, namely:

1. Do the students know about lexical meaning

2. Is there any correlation between students' understanding about lexical meaning and their reading comprehension?

This study has some aims that is hopefully be useful to the success of the students in learning English; the aims are:

1. To find out whether the students know about lexical meaning or not
2. To know more whether any correlation between students' understanding about lexical meaning and their reading comprehension.

II. METHOD OF THE STUDY

This study is done by doing an observation towards the first semester students of STMIK TRIGUNA DHARMA in 2016-2017 academic year.

IV. The Discussion of the Study

Living in this modern world is not easy. Many things in our life should be covered well. To survive means to struggle. In other words, we have to do things skillfully so that we can still have what we have now and to get the new ones that we dream of. People live in this changing world should equip themselves with a bound of knowledge and skills so that they can compete to get for instance, the favorite job.

To get valuable knowledge and skills we have to learn. Learning is a process to get knowledge and skills intensely. Learning can be done not only by the need of a teacher but also alone. Both these ways need the ability

to 'read' well. Having the ability to comprehend the reading materials is crucial, especially for those who study in campus, just like Triguna Dharma's students.

The ability to comprehend English written materials is not easy for most students in ESL countries. The teachers and lectures often found difficulties how to enlarge the students' achievement in reading. Meanwhile, reading comprehension requires students to have a good understanding of lexical meaning or vocabulary meaning which is more popular among students in Triguna Dharma. It means that they have to have a lot of vocabulary.

Vocabulary plays important role in language learning. Vocabulary is also an essential skill for learning to read, speak, write and listen. Without sufficient vocabulary, people cannot communicate and express their feeling both in form of spoken and written effectively. The more people master vocabulary the more they can speak, write, read and listen as they want. Wilkins in Thornbury (2004: 13) states that without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed. It means that even someone has good grammar but it will be useless if they do not know many vocabularies. In addition, it is supported by Ur (1996: 60) that vocabulary is one of important things to be taught in learning foreign language because it will be impossible to speak up without variety of words. Those

statements imply the importance of teaching vocabulary as a foreign language.

Vocabulary is central to second language (L2) acquisition. As McCarthy (1990: 140) states that without words to express a wider range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way. Nation in Schmitt (2000: 5) proposes a list of the different kinds of knowledge that a person must master in order to know a words: the meaning of word, the written form of the word, the spoken form of the word, the grammatical behavior of the word, the collocations of the word, the register of the word, the association of the word, and the frequency of the word.

Hebert and Kamil (2005: 3) define vocabulary is the knowledge of meanings of words. The term *vocabulary* has a range of meanings. For example, some teachers use the term to mean *sight-word vocabularies*, referring to students' immediate recognition of words in print; other teachers refer to words students understand as their *meaning vocabularies*. Still other teachers use the term to mean *listening vocabularies*, or students' understanding of words that they hear in the spoken language. Content teachers use the term *academic vocabulary* to refer to content-specific words. Within this section, we use the term *vocabulary* to refer to students' understanding of oral and print words. Vocabularies include conceptual

knowledge of words that goes well beyond a simple dictionary definition. Students' vocabulary knowledge is a building process that occurs over time as they make connections to other words, learn examples and non-examples of the word and related words, and use the word accurately within the context of the sentence (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005).

Vocabulary learning is very important for people who learn English both as foreign language and as second language. Tozcu and Coady (2004: 473) point out learning vocabulary is an important aspect of language two and foreign language acquisition and academic achievement and is vital to reading comprehension and proficiency, to which it is closely linked.

It was found that the students who understood about lexical meaning and had a lot of vocabulary were easier to comprehend the reading materials given. This understanding also made them more confident to express themselves using English both in written and spoken.

IV. CONCLUSION

Reading is one the most important skills in language acquisition. It makes us get valuable information about things that we really want to know to still be exist and progressed in our life. The success of our reading depends much on how many words we know their meanings and our ability to understand words composition in the sentences.

Reading comprehension needs the skill to extract the written texts both explicitly and implicitly. The students can be said have the ability in reading comprehension if they can obtain literal meaning of words, associate the meanings with their personal experiences, and make judgment based on the reading material.

There are a strong positive correlation between the students' ability in understanding lexical meaning of words and their reading comprehension. It can be said that the more vocabulary they have the better understanding they get in their reading comprehension.

REFERENCES

- [1] Alexander, F. Still, J. 1988. *Teaching Reading*. Boston: Scott Foresman.
- [2] Cranbank, W. 1979. *Exercises and Test of the Research*. USA: Regent Publishing Company.
- [3] Grabe, William and Fredricka L. Stoller. 2002. *Teaching and Researching Reading*. England: Longman.
- [4] Heibert, Elfrieda H and Kamil, Michael L. 1995. *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [4] Otto, John F. 1979. *Teaching Reading of Children of Special Needs*. New York: Allyn Publishing.
- [5] Payne, B.D. 1992. *Basic Reader Instruction: Effects of Comprehension Monitoring Training on Reading Comprehension, Strategy used and Attitude*. *Reading Research and Instruction*. London: Language Teaching Publication.
- [6] Schmitt, Norbert and Mc Carthy. 1997. *Vocabulary, Description, Acquisition and Pedagogy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [7] Snow, John; Burns, Michael; & Griffin, Alex. 1998. *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary: Bringing Research to Practice*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publisher.
- [8] Sudiyono, Anas. 2000. *Pengantar Statistik Pendidikan*. Jakarta: PT. Raja Grafindo Persada.
- [9] Thornbury, Scott. 2002. *How to Teach Vocabulary*. London: Longman
- [10] Tozcu, A and J. Coady. 2004. *Successful Learning of Frequent Vocabulary through CALL also Benefits Reading Comprehension and Speed*. Retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com>.
- [11] Turner, T. 1988. *Comprehension Reading for Meaning: Teaching Reading*. London: ScottForesman.
- [12] Ur, Penny. 1996. *A Course in Language Teaching, Practice and Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- [13] Zints, Miles V. 1980. *The Reading Process of the Teacher and the Learner*. Third Edition. Iowa: C. Brown Company.
- [14] Lexical Definition at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lexical_definition. Downloaded on April 5, 2017.