AN ANALYSIS ON THE ABILITY OF SECOND YEAR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY IN GUESSING MEANING OF UNFAMILIAR WORDS IN SCIENTIFIC PARAGRAPH

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Abstract

This research described the ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in guessing meaning of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph. The design of this research was descriptive. Twenty-six 2th year English students of Bung Hatta University in academic year of 2013/2014 participated in this research. In selecting sample, the researcher used cluster random sampling technique. The instrument was reading test in the form of short answer questions. The test indicators were context clues and affixation analysis. Before giving the real test, the researcher tried it out to the students out of the sample. The result of try out test was used to analyze item difficulties, item discrimination, and reliability of the test. The result of data analysis showed that generally the students' ability in guessing meaning of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph was moderate. It is indicated by the fact that 16 students had moderate ability (61.54%). In conclusion, the researcher suggests the lecturer to encourage the students to use context clues and affixation analysis. In addition, the students are suggested to have knowledge of the clues and type of clues as well as having knowledge of the meaning of each affix. For further research, it is worth to conduct the research about what problems that the students have in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words in a paragraph or a text.

Key words: Ability, Guessing Meaning, Unfamiliar Words, Scientific Paragraph

Introduction

Reading skill is one of language skill which perhaps people can acquire in their everyday activity. People will always read about various texts according to their needs. Some may read article, magazine, newspaper, and many others to gain specific information. Others just read for having fun or getting pleasure of what they read. In addition, reading is a gift that makes people knowing what authors do, think, and share.

Reading is also one of the language skills in English which should be mastered by the students. At the university, reading

becomes a routine activity. It means students should read materials written in English such as books, text, passages, articles, newspaper, magazine, and international journals relating to their field. Students should master this skill in order to understand the material given. In addition, they can get many knowledge and information through reading. If the students read many books, they will get more knowledge as well as to enrich their vocabulary. It is also considered as the essential channel of communication in the world. Lastly, according to Faidatun (2013:2) "Improving reading skill will improve students' academic performance."

Thompson and Vaugn (2007: 157) state that reading is a process of transforming print or written text into meaning. In addition, Johnson (2008: 5) adds that reading is the practice of using text to create meaning of the text. Moreover, reading is the process of constructing meaning from a word or cluster of words (Seyler, 2008:3).

Perhaps the common issue in reading is reading comprehension. A process that involves memory, thinking abstractly, visualization, and understanding vocabulary as well as knowing how to properly decode called reading comprehension (Ness, 2011). In addition, according to Vaughn and Thompson (2004:98-99), comprehension is the active process of constructing meaning from a text. If students want to comprehend what they read, they must understand the structure of different text (Brassel & Rasinski, 2008:97). To understand and learn a text or passage is the main purpose of learning to read (Thompson & Vaughn, 2007: 113). Thus, learning different of the text is important for improving student's reading skill.

According to Thompson and Vaughn (2007: 159), text is defined as the words that create written material, such as story, newspaper, article, or section of a textbook. In addition, various types of texts are used to support reading skill and it may play a substantial role in word solving (Scanlon, *et.al* 2010: 191). Readers may read various types of texts to gain specific information and to fulfill their desire to get knowledge, information and pleasure. One type of text that was discussed in this study is scientific text.

Lien (2013: 876) explains that scientific text can be defined as the text that involves science, mathematics, engineering, and technology. Goldman *et.al* (as cited in Lien, 2013: 876) argue that that there are many examples of scientific texts such as academic book, scientific journal article, technical manuals and information brochure for the public.

Words or vocabulary knowledge becomes one of the factors which cause difficulties in comprehending the text. In addition, according to Huang and Eslami (2013: 1), second language learners perceive vocabulary acquisition as one of their greatest difficulties. Moreover, limited vocabulary knowledge is a main obstacle for L2 learners to achieve higher level of reading competence (Lee, 2010: 23). In a nutshell, having insufficient storage of vocabulary in mind makes someone unable to comprehend the text being read.

In fact, there are many strategies to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. Wang (2011) states that advanced readers who want to be a successful learner should learn different strategies for dealing with unknown words while reading. Two common strategies of guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words are by using context clues and word formation analysis. According to Johnsons (2008:47),"Context clue means figuring out what the word is by looking at what makes sense in the sentence." In addition, Pasternak & Wrangell (2007: 119) believe that" Sometimes, we can understand the meaning of unfamiliar words by looking at the word(s) in the context of the sentences and paragraphs that surround them." Another way to guess the meaning of unfamiliar word is by looking at ways of forming words which is often called by word formation. Word formation is generally associated with guessing the large amount of words with the aim for getting an overall understanding of material.

In learning context clues and word formation analysis there was a text that belonged to the scientific text. The students were asked to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words in the scientific paragraph.

However, based on the researcher's result of interview that researcher did toward the second year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University, most of the students got difficulties in reading. They found that they did not understand the text in which there are many unknown words. They said it is because they do not know the meaning of the words or lack of vocabulary. Thus, they need to look up the dictionary every time they faced the difficult words. Theoretically, it wastes their time and makes they fell bored and tired and even it can destroy their understanding. In other words, they loss their concentration about what they have read before as they are consulting the dictionary.

Based on the paragraph above, it can be assumed that the students cannot

use context clues to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph. For example they cannot guess the meaning of the word "talkative" in "Mary is quiet, but her sister is very talkative". The student knew the meaning of the word "quiet", but they cannot guess the meaning of the word talkative even though there was a clue "or" to show the meaning of the word "talkative". In addition, they also cannot do word formation analysis to find out the meaning of unfamiliar words "incomprehensible" in "It is incomprehensible to me why he acts like that". The students cannot guess the meaning of the word "incomprehensible" that consists of *in-*, *comprehend*, and *-ible*.

Basically, there are two types of text consisting of non-literary text (scientific text) and literary text. Scientific or non-literary text tells about the fact or factual information. Diez (in Cortez, 2013: 13) argues that it is important to the students to understand scientific material that commonly used such as books, articles, scientific journal, and many others. In addition, understanding scientific text will allow students to improve student's academic performance.

Context clues are hints found in the sentence, paragraph, or passage that reader can use to understand new word or unfamiliar word. There are many different types of context clues and some of them are definition or description clue, example clues, synonym restatement clue, contrast or antonym clue, mood or tune clue, experience clue, analysis or structure clue, inference clue, and cause and effect clue (Prestridge: 2005). However, Mc.Wharter (2005) identifies four common context clues consisting of definition clues, example clues, contrast clues, and inference clues.

In general, the purpose of this research is to describe the ability of second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in guessing meaning of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph.

The specific purposes of this research were as follows:

1. To describe the ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University to find context clues in guessing meaning of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph.
2. To describe the ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph through context clues.
3. To describe the ability of the second year students of English Department

of Bung Hatta University to separate root and affix of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph.

4. To describe the ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph through affixation analysis.

Research Method

The design of the research was descriptive research. Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study (Gay, 1987: 189).. In this case, this research aimed at describing the second year student's ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through context clues and affixation analysis.

Gay (1987: 102) states that population is the group of interest to researcher, the group to which she or he would like the result of this study could be generalized. The population of this study was all of the second year students of English Department of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Bung Hatta University who registered in academic year of 2013/2014. The reason to choose second year students of English Department, Bung Hatta University was that they have learnt a series of Reading subjects: Reading I (reading aloud), Reading II and Reading III. The members of the population were distributed into three classes: class A, class B, and Class C. It consisted of 40 students in class A, 37 students in class B, and 27 students in class C. Thus, the number of members of the population was 104 students.

Because the number of population was quite large, so the researcher took sample. The sample is a part of population. According to Gay (1987:101), sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals represent the larger group from which they were selected.

In this study, the researcher used cluster random sampling technique to select the sample of this study. Gay *et.al* (2009:129) state that cluster random sampling maybe the only feasible method of selecting a sample when the researcher is unable to obtain a list of all members of the population. In addition, it was used because the members of populations were distributed in groups or classes. The researcher used cluster random sampling technique because the population was homogenous. The members of population had the same curriculum, syllabus, material, and lecturer in Reading III subject.

To choose the sample researcher followed a procedure as follows. First, she wrote the name of each class in three pieces of paper and put them into a box. After shaking it, she chose one of them by closing her eyes and took one paper. Finally, the selected class would be class sample (class C), and all members of selected class or class sample would be the sample of this research (27 students). However, there were just 26 students who came and did the test. Thus, the size of the sample was 25 % of population. Gay (1987) argues that the minimum size for descriptive research is 10% of population. Therefore, the size was accepted.

In this study, the researcher collected the data through reading test. It was constructed in form of short-answer questions. She chose short-answer questions because it was regarded as the best measurement for finding out the real knowledge and fact of the students' ability to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words (Hopkins & Antes, 1990:229). Before giving the test to the students, the researcher tried it out. The test aspects were context clues and affixation analysis. The try out test consisted of 10 items for finding context clues (item no.1 and 9 for definition clues, item no. 3 and 7 for contrast clues, item no. 5, 11, and 19 for example clues, and item no. 13, 15, and 17 for inference clues), 10 items for guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through context clues (item no. 2 and 10 for definition clues, item no. 4 and 8 for contrast clues, item no 6, 12, and 20 for example clues, and item no. 14, 16, and 18 for inference clues), 8 items for separating root and affix, and 8 items for guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through affixation analysis. To make sure, the specification of the try out test can be shown in Table 1.

Table 1
The Specification of the Try out Test

Aspects	Indicators	Item Number	Total Item
Context Clues	Finding Context Clues	1,3,5,7,9, 11,13, 15,17,19	10
	Guessing Meaning	2,4,6,8,1 0,12,14, 16,18,20	10
Affixation Analysis	Root and Affix Analysis	21,23,25, 27,29,31, 33,35	8
	Guessing Meaning	22,24,26, 28,30,32, 34,36	8
Total		36	36

The researcher tried out the test to students out of the sample to find out whether the students understood the instruction and the time allocation was sufficient or not. After having the try out

test, it was found that the time allocation was enough for students to do the test (60 minutes). In addition, the students also understood with the instruction given. The result of the try-out was also used to find out the reliability of the test, the difficulty index, and discrimination index.

1. Item Difficulties

To analyze the item difficulties, the researcher used formula suggested by Arikunto (2012, 219-239) as follow:

$$P = \frac{B}{JS}$$

The result of difficulty index is classified into the followings (Arikunto, 2012:225):

P : .00 - .30 = difficult

P : .31 - .70 = moderate

P :.71 - 1.00 = easy

According to Brown (2010:71), the appropriate test items will generally have item difficulties that range between .15 and .85. He also states that there are two reasons for occasionally including a very easy item they are to build in some effective feelings of success among lower ability students and to serve as warm-up items and a very difficult items can provide a challenge to highest-ability students. Therefore, the researcher took the items difficulty which have index ranging from .15 – .85.

2. Item Discrimination

The researcher used the formula stated by Arikunto (2012:228) to get the value of item discrimination. The formula is follow:

$$D = \frac{BA}{JA} - \frac{BB}{JB}$$

Where:

D = item discrimination

JA = sum of students in the high group

JB = sum of students in the low group

BA = sum of the students in the high group who answer correctly

BB = sum of the students in the low group who answer correctly

The result of item discrimination is classified based on Arikunto's classification (2012:232) as follow:

D : .00 - .20 = poor

D : .21 - .40 = satisfactory

D : .41 - .70 = good

D : .71 – 1.00 = excellent

Among the range above, the researcher used the items that had D .21 – 1.00 as test items for real test. It was because the items with lower discrimination index are not a powerful indicator in determining between the high ability students and low ability students (Brown, 2010:71).

After the researcher counted item difficulties and item discrimination of try

out test, she found that there were 6 items should be discarded from the test. They had poor item discrimination and easy item difficulty which cannot be accepted to this test. The researcher discarded 6 test items (12, 15, 17, 20, 22, 31) because the result of item difficulties and item discrimination analysis was not enough. Then, the researcher got 30 items for the real (final) test. The researcher took 30 test items in the real test because the researcher thought the number of the test item was enough to measure the students' ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph.

The test consisted of 8 questions for finding context clues (item no. 1 and 9 for definition clues, item no. 5 and 11 for example clues, item no. 12 for inference clues), 8 questions for guessing the meaning through context clues (item no.2 and 10 for definition clues, item no. 6 and 16 for example clues, item no. 4 and 8 for contrast clues, item no. 13, 14, and 15 for inference clues), 7 questions for separating root and affix, and 7 questions for guessing meaning through affixation analysis. To make sure, the specification of instrument is shown in Table below:

Table 2
The Specification of the Real Test

Aspects	Indicators	Item Number	Total Item
Context Clues	Finding Context Clues	1,2,3,7,9, 11,12,16	8
	Guessing Meaning	2,4,6,8, 10,13, 14,15	8
Affixation Analysis	Root and Affix Analysis	17,18,20, 22,24,27, 29	7
	Guessing Meaning	19,21,23, 25,26,28, 30	7
Total		30	30

One of the criteria of good test is valid. The test is valid if it measures what is supposed to measure. Gay (1987:129) states that one of the types of validity is content validity. It means that the test is valid if it fixes with the materials that have been given to the students and it is based on the curriculum and syllabus. To validate the test the researcher chose the content validity in which the test was constructed based on the curriculum and syllabus on Reading III subject. Furtherly, she discussed it with the lecturer who taught Reading subject.

Reliability is the degree of the test that consistently measures whatever to be measured (Gay, 1987:135). To find out the reliability of the test, the researcher used split-half method in which the test is divided into two groups. The researcher calculated the coefficient correlation of the

first half items and second half items by using Pearson Product Moment formula suggested by Arikunto (2012: 87) as follow:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{n\sum xy - \left(\sum x\right)\left(\sum y\right)}{\sqrt{\left\{\left(n\sum x^2\right) - \left(\sum x\right)^2\right\}\left\{\left(n\sum y^2\right) - \left(\sum y\right)^2\right\}}}$$

Where:

r_{xy} = the coefficient correlation of x and y (first half and second half items)

n = the number of students who follow the test

$\sum x$ = the sum of scores of the first half test items

$\sum y$ = the sum of scores of the second half test items

$\sum xy$ = the total cross product of xy

According to Gay (1987: 139), to know the reliability of the whole test, the result was analyzed by using Spearman Brown formula as follow:

$$r_{ii} = \frac{2r_{xy}}{1+r_{xy}}$$

Where:

r_{ii} = the reliability coefficient of the total test

r_{xy} = the coefficient of the two halves of the test

The researcher used general coefficient correlation by Arikunto (2012:232) as follows:

.81-1.00 = very high correlation
.61-.80 = high correlation
.41-.60 = enough correlation
.21-.40 = low correlation
.00-.20 = very low correlation

The researcher got the degree of coefficient correlation of the test was .76 and the reliability coefficient for total test was .86 which means that the test was reliable.

The data of this study were students' score on guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words. In collecting the data, the researcher did several steps as follow:

1. Giving the test to the sample.
2. Collecting all of the students' answer sheets.
3. Checking the student's answer based on the key answer made by the researcher. She gave 1 for the right answer and 0 for wrong answer. The highest possible score was 30 and the lowest possible score was 0.
4. Counting the total score of each stude

To analyze the data, the researcher followed the next procedures:

1. Presenting the raw score
2. Calculating Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) by using formula as follows:

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

Where:

M = Mean

$\sum x$ = The total score of the students

N = The number of the students

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{\sum x^2}{N} - \left(\frac{\sum x}{N}\right)^2}$$

Where:

SD = Standard Deviation

$\sum x$ = The total score of the students

$\sum x^2$ = The total of x^2

N = The number of the students

3. Classifying the student's ability into high, moderate, and low ability based on the following classification:

>M+1SD = high ability

(M-1SD) → (M+1SD) = moderate ability

<M-1SD = low ability

4. Calculating the percentage of the students who got high, moderate, and low ability by using the following formula:

$$P = \frac{R}{T} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P = Percentage of the student's score

R = The sum of the students who get high, moderate, and low

T = The sum of the students

Findings and Discussions

a. Findings

Based on the result of data analysis, the researcher found that 16 students (61.54%) had moderate ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph. In specific, it was found that student's ability to find context clues in guessing meaning of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph was moderate. It was proved by the fact that 18 students (69.23%) had moderate ability. Then, the student's ability to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph through context clues was also moderate. It is indicated by the fact that 20 students (76.92%) had moderate ability. It was also found students' ability to separate root and affix of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph was moderate. It is indicated by the fact that 11 students (42.30%) had moderate ability. Lastly, it was revealed that students' ability to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph through affixation analysis was moderate. It was demonstrated by the result of data analysis that 22 students (84.62%) had moderate ability. In order to be clear, it can be seen in Table below:

Table 3

The Percentage of Student's Ability in Guessing Meaning of Unfamiliar Words in Scientific Paragraph

No.	Aspects	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Guessing meaning in general	16	61.54%
2.	In finding context clues	18	69.23%
3.	In guessing the meaning through context clues	20	76.92%
4.	In separating root and affix	11	42.30%
5.	In guessing the meaning through affixation analysis	22	86.62%

b. Discussions

1) Students' Ability to Guess the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words in Scientific Paragraph.

As discussed above, 61.54% students had moderate ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph. It indicates that most of the students still had problems in finding the clue of unfamiliar words and guessing their meaning through context clues strategy. In addition, the students also still did not understand well about separating root and affix(es) to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words and figuring out their meanings through affixation analysis strategy.

2) Students' Ability to Find Context Clues of Unfamiliar Words in Scientific Paragraph

Another finding of this study was that in finding context clues of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph most of the students had moderate ability. It is indicated by the result that 69.23% students had moderate ability. Based on the result of data analysis, the students could not understand the clues in definition clues, contrast clues, example clues, and inference clues. For example:

Reading Test

Can looking at a color affect your behavior or ***alter*** *your mood?.....*

Question**:** *What words can become clues to guess the meaning of unfamiliar word "alter"?*

For this question, there were 21 students who could not answer the question correctly. The correct answer is "or" (line 1) because it shows that the word "affect" had the same meaning with the word "alter". The clue "or" belonged to the definition clues. However, the students decided that the clues were *behavior, color affect, and researcher.*

3) Students' Ability to Guess the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words in Scientific Paragraph through Context Clues

The next finding of this study was that in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through context clues, the students' ability was moderate. It is indicated by the result of data analysis showing that 76.92% students had moderate ability. The result of data analysis on the student's answer sheet indicates that the students still had problem to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words correctly. For example:

Reading Test

Can looking at a color affect your behavior or ***alter*** *your mood?*

Question**:** *What does "alter" mean?*

Relating to the example above, the students are asked to guess the meaning of the word "alter". The correct answer is "affect" (line 1). This example examined student's ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words by using definition clues. Clue "or" was provided to help students to find out the meaning of the word" alter". However, there were 4 students who answered incorrectly. They stated that the meaning of the word "alter" were *character, look, and personality*.

4) Students' Ability to Separate Root and Affix of Unfamiliar Words in Scientific Paragraph

As already discussed previously, this study also found that in separating the root and affix of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph, the student's ability was moderate. It is indicated by the fact that 42.30% students had moderate ability. Based on the student's answer sheets, the students still had problem in discriminating between the root and affix. For example:

Question**:** *Analyze the word formation of the word "misconceptions"!*

- *root : _____*
- *affix(es): _____*

Relating to the question above, the root is *concept* and the affixes are *mis-* and *–ion.* However, half of the students (50%) did not answer the question correctly. They separated affix and root incorrectly like *conception, misconcept, misconceptions.*

5) Students' Ability to Guess the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words in Scientific Paragraph through Affixation Analysis

The last finding of this study was that in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words through affixation analysis, the student's ability was moderate. As a matter

of fact, the result of data analysis demonstrated that 84.62% students had moderate ability. Based on the data analysis, most of the students had inability to guess the meaning of the unfamiliar words through affixation analysis. The problems might be caused by the students' unfamiliarity with the meaning of the root or the meaning of the affix. For example:

Reading Test

New research has caused neuroscientist to reject some widely-held ***misconceptions*** *about the brain…….*

Question**:** *What does "misconceptions" mean?*

Relating to the example above, the students are asked to guess the meaning of the word "misconception". However, most of the students 69.23% did not answer the question correctly. They wrote its meaning incorrectly like *brain, not concept, without concept, does not prepare, and miscommunication.*

Conclusions

After interpreting the result of data analysis, it can be concluded as follows:

1. In general, the ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph was moderate. This conclusion was indicated by the fact that 61.54% students had moderate ability in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words in scientific paragraph.
2. The ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University to find the clue of unfamiliar words was moderate. It was proved by the result of data analysis demonstrating that there were 18 (69.23%) out of 26 students who had moderate ability.
3. The ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clues was moderate. It was proved by the fact that there were 20 (76.92%) out of 26 students who had moderate ability.
4. The ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University to separate root and affix was moderate. It was indicated by the result of data analysis revealing that there were 11 (42.30%) out of 26 students who had moderate ability.
5. The ability of the second year students of English Department of Bung Hatta University to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words through affixation

analysis was moderate. It was proved by the fact that there were 22 (84.62%) out of 26 students who had moderate ability.

Based on the conclusions as already discussed previously, the researcher would like to propose several suggestions as follows:

1. The lecturers are suggested to encourage students not to depend on dictionary, but use context clues and affixation analysis and implement context clue and affixation analysis to find out the meaning of unfamiliar words. In other words, the lecturers should make the students accustomed to guess the meaning.
2. For students, they are suggested to have knowledge of the clues and type of clues in guessing meaning through context clues as well as having knowledge of the meaning of each affix, so that they can guess the meaning of unfamiliar words correctly.
3. For further researcher, the researcher suggests the next researcher to conduct the research about what problems that the students have in guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words in paragraph.

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